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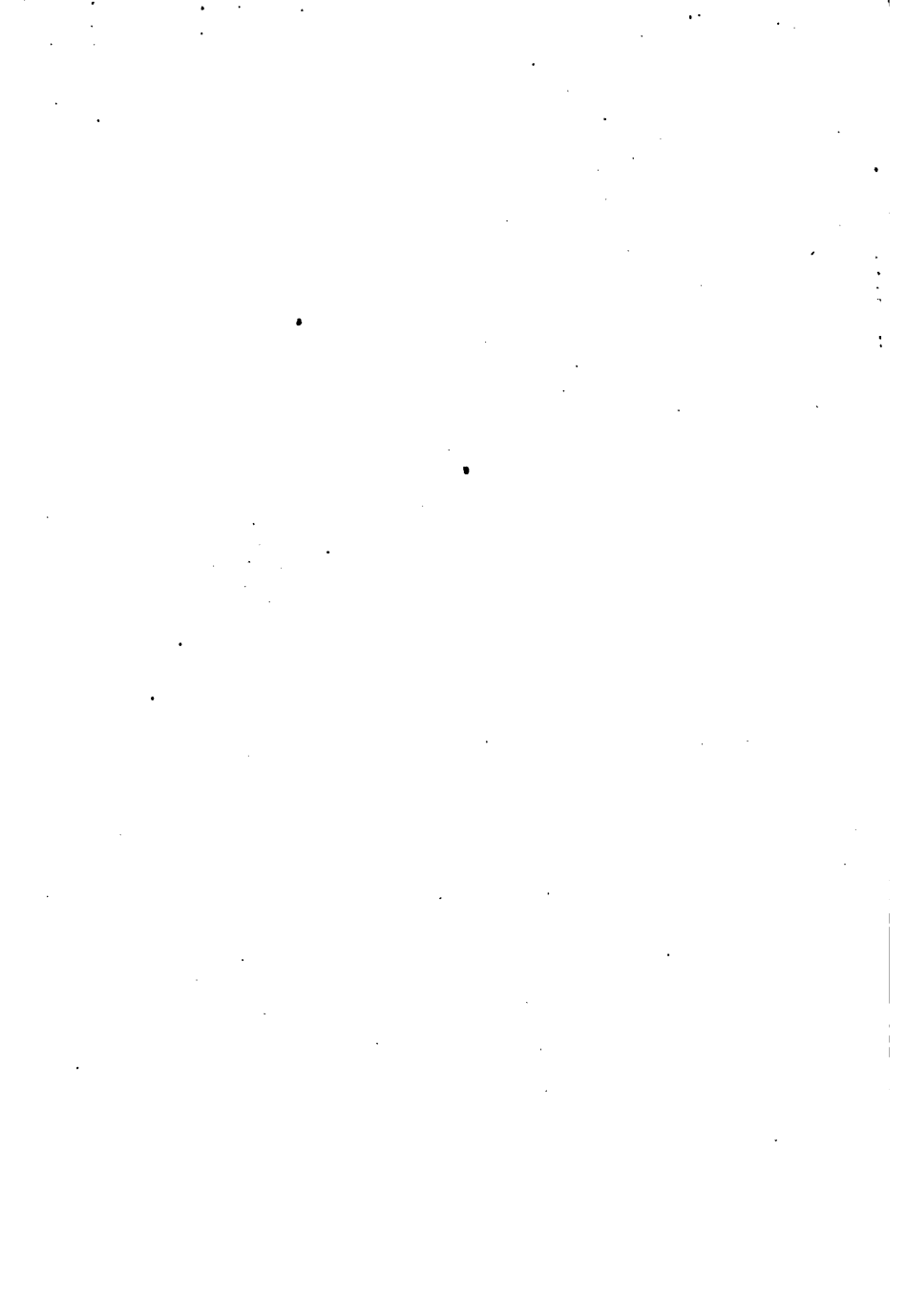
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THE SOJOURNER

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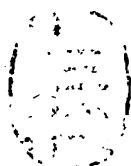
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PUTTING FORTH AN EBBING STRENGTH, HE DREW HER UP BESIDE HIM

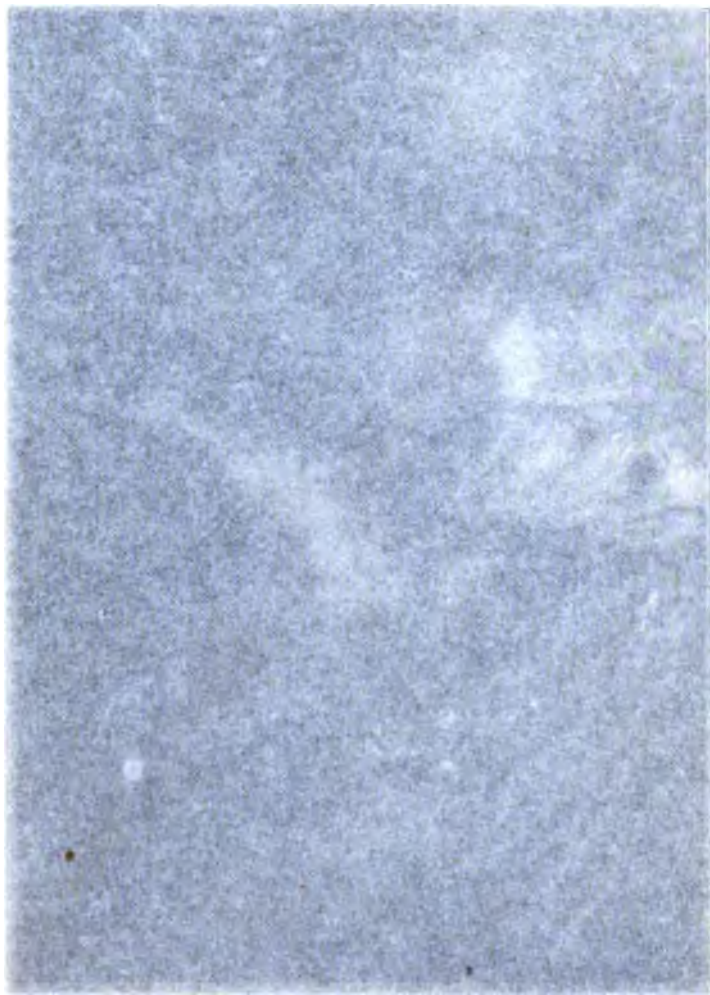
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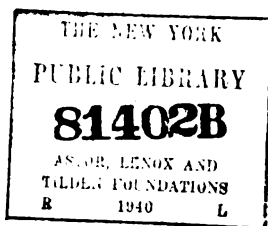
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TO
MY MOTHER

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PUTTING FORTH AN EBBING STRENGTH, HE DREW HER

UP BESIDE HIM *Frontispiece*

MOLTEN ESSENCE OF ALL THIS LOVELY COLOR LEAPED

THE FOAMING TREVETT *Facing p. 98*

MOONLIGHT . . . BATHED IN IT; SQUARE TOWERS AND

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OVERTURE

THE SOJOURNER

I

NOT A CARE IN THE WORLD

SHE was valiantly attempting to write letters. But how could one write letters with such an irrepressible as Jack Holliday roosting on a hassock at one's feet, and keeping one's mind in perpetual turmoil?

"I'm writing, Jack," the girl said, severely, the penholder (it was Jack's own fountain pen) against her lips.

"No? Is it possible? I thought you were merely tearing up all the stationery."

With the greatest absorption in the world, the young man continued to tumble that absurd mite of a kitten about on the rug, occasionally drawing his forefinger along the floor by way of variety. The tiny creature was growling and worrying that finger like a miniature tiger, pouncing only to draw back and pounce again, its two eyes like bright blue beads. And then this ferocious beast was abruptly tumbled on its ecstatic back, to writhe fiercely, with its pink mouth open. Violet struggled with her correspondence, but the adjacent pantomime was too distracting; she only contrived to ruin more of the Inn's stationery.

A bell boy appeared in the door of the gayly chintzed drawing-room.

"Pardon, sir, but the management don't allow animals."

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"How odd!" commented the young fellow on the floor, without discontinuing his employment. "I see ladies coming into the lobby from their motor cars with such tabooed articles as Pomeranians, Lithuanians, and Chows draped nonchalantly over an arm. Now why, kind mentor from the desk, am I not to be allowed what harmless solace I can import in a coat pocket?"

He gazed seriously at the messenger, who retired non-plussed whence he had come. With exasperating deliberation Jack drew out the handkerchief from his breast pocket and slid the furry mite into its place. It just fitted, its ingenuous head and two downy paws lapping over above. Abruptly the kitten began to purr, dazzled, china-blue eyes on the girl. Jack bent his face down to it, humming some inane tune; but he could not restrict his musical yearnings to mere humming; presently the girl heard something like this:

"Pleasant, purring, pretty pussy,
Frisky, full of fun, and fussy,
Mortal foe of mouse and rat,
How I love my old black cat—

only you are not old, you are not black, and you never even saw a mouse or r—"

"Jack!"

"Dear *Madam*, how you startled me! I thought you were writing."

"Indeed! Pray, how could any one write with the present comic opera going on right under one's nose?"

"Excuse me one moment, please, I'm interrupted," explained Jack to the kitten. "What comic opera? This is the realm of high art."

"Oh, Jack, Jack!" laughed the girl, her cheeks crimsoning with the quaintness of those two pairs of eyes turned on her in such innocent surprise. "You are too absurd. Where did you get that strange little scrap?"

"This," replied Jack, solemnly, "is Ahasuerus, the

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Persian. Note the regal hauteur of the eye, the supercilious modeling of the left eye-winker. He is also a knight of—er—Malta, I guess, and of the Order of the Double Cross. At least the cook had given him the double-cross when I saw him first."

From her face to his the glimmer of mirth was like a shaft of sunlight.

"A moment, please," continued Jack, with the most profound sobriety. "Ahasuerus has had a stormy career, the—er—eldest son of a royal widow in reduced circumstances—very reduced. Mewing, Ahasuerus came into the world—"

"I didn't ask for his genealogy. Can't you be serious, you ridiculous boy? I don't think you will ever grow any older."

"Into the world, and applied for membership in a certain club on Prospect Street. He was not a properly registered student of Princeton University, and membership was refused. His little tummy was quite empty when I met him wobbling down the walk. I took the impoverished Prince in to breakfast. Since then he is too proud to take his meals with a mere rout of college students, and prefers to quaff his Jersey cream in solitude at my rooms. Otherwise his is a very lovable and democratic nature."

Jack placed the kitten on the desk in front of her, where it swayed shakily on its tiny legs, moving its surprised baby head up and down. Violet snatched the furry ball up and kissed it, while the young man smiled.

"You cunning thing! And was your little tummy empty?" and similar nonsense. Finally she returned the kitten to him and bent her eyes on him pleadingly.

"Jack, I simply *must* finish these letters. Won't you please stop being so silly? This is to a lady in mourning."

"She comes to Princeton on Junior Promenade day—to write letters. . . . Vi, can't you hear the murmur of

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Prom-time voices in the halls and on the piazza? Don't you see how bright and warm the sun is, and hear the jovial growl of the blatant automobile? Come ride with me in the Simplex, and be my love. My motto: Write your misdeeds at home. *Carpe diem* in a red runabout."

"How you do love to jabber, Jacky!" sighed Violet. "Sometimes I almost believe you have a Doctor's Degree in pure and applied nonsense. Haven't you any recitations this morning?"

"She wishes to be rid of me," tragically drawing a book out of his pocket. "Verily, there are two; but the light of thine own fair countenance sufficeth for many a lecture lost."

"Well, Jack," she conceded, appeased by the incense offered, "I ought not to do this, but I'll agree to put off those other notes if you will be sane while I finish this one."

Brightness invaded the boy's rugged face.

"Indeed I will, Vi. I'll be very, very good. I'll read *Economics* if you'll make it short. Then we'll—"

Violet started to write her letter again, and John Holliday to peruse the tome in his hand, ostentatiously. But the book sank gradually; the boy's earnest gaze spilling past it to rest on the face bent with such pretty determination above the letter.

He wondered again at her strange, beautiful contradiction of feature, and the pale amber fineness of her hair, her baffling, deep eyes, the dark, penciled brows and twilight length of lashes, which almost took one's breath by their vividness in the pale rose of her face.

But now they were out together, chatting joyously as Jack piloted the big car down Nassau Street, turning into the campus by Alexander Hall. It is fine pastime coasting about the beautiful campus of Old Nassau, beautiful even in February, when the great trees are leafless and the turf is not yet green. The stately buildings are like the same number of castles of the Middle Age, peopled

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by bustling youth, and flaunting from lofty turrets their flowing banners of orange and black.

A pleasure, indeed, to follow these two on their rounds: to see the Princess holding her little court among knots of bareheaded, smiling young men; to hear the bubble of jollity about the throbbing throne of her twentieth-century chariot, with introductions the order of the day. Even a glimpse into the Gymnasium, its floor a golden mirror; and sympathetic raillery with an harassed member of the Junior Committee,—in his shirt sleeves, bustling about among the caterer's minions, hurling sofa cushions into the draped luxury of boxes, and directing with autocratic forefinger the rapid transit *gloria mundi* of some potted palms by perspiring Freshmen in black skullcaps. The morning melts away. Jack, one hand on the steering-wheel, has made strange pantomime with the other. The hour lends its aid in construing—"Luncheon."

The girl nodded, sparkling with pleasure.

"And in the large hall with your friends, not in solitary grandeur. I like to hear them say, 'Pass the cow,' and 'Spear me a slice, will you?' at the next table, when they think no one is listening."

"Blighted relics of Freshman Commons, Vi. Go you, though!" cried Jack.

Jack changed his gears and they shot down the vista of Washington Road. The young fellow gazed into the glowing, girlish face under the fur toque with something more than wonder; indeed, it was with something more than admiration, also. The delicate mantling of her cheeks made him think of sweet peas in the garden of his Virginia home.

"Do you remember, Vi, when we used to play house in the old garden? Do you remember the fine apartments I built you, with walls of oyster shells?"

A sudden wave of gravity invaded his voice; the machine swept down by the shore of the lake.]

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"Vi, this is the last year for your brother and me in Old Nassau. All the fellows in my class have something they want to do—a profession or a career of some sort—I *have nothing*. Father wants me to stick around with him on Wall Street and learn the difference between rolling-stock and stocks on 'change. It is probably something lacking in me, for sometimes mere money-making seems such a dreary way to spend one's time."

He paused; the girl turned her head and looked him in the eyes. Familiar with those eyes from her babyhood, never had he been able to name their shade. Sometimes in the light they would seem to be soft hazel; again, he would take oath they were dark gray; or they might run the gamut of rich hues from clearest sepia to black, with a tinge of violet like the glow in an amethyst. Now they held an opalescent gleam, into which he read all the tenderness of his own thought, then awoke to find them undecipherable. Jack had known this girl all his life, yet he no longer knew her when he looked into those eyes, which were her greatest charm. She mystified, fascinated, startled, provoked, intoxicated him by turns. And, nevertheless, he was wholly at ease with her—a paradox!

"Jacky," said she at length, as though reading him, "you are a peculiar fellow. You ought to be writing books, with that fantastic imagination of yours, or fostering the new Democracy. . . . Why not *do* something, in politics or something?"

Jack flushed gratefully.

"That is good of you, Sis. But you have no idea how unthinkable useless I am. Politics invariably makes me think of a set of false teeth—which won't fit anybody. True, I might collaborate with the *Infant's Gazette*, or something equally learned. I'm ignorant in seven languages. I know three hundred and ten different variations of football attack and defense; and—and—well, only how to be useless and extravagant in fifty million different ways."

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"Dear me!" laughed Violet. "Aren't there a few items on your list you could turn to account? You know more about horses than any one in New York. You can drive a car on two wheels around corners as well as the most dangerous and expensive chauffeur with a name ending in *i-e-r*. A useful saving in tires. They don't wear out so fast in the air, you know. You might be of use as One of the Finest, piloting dazed pedestrians from curb to curb on Fifth Avenue. Perhaps your manners are not sufficiently elegant, though."

"No," agreed Jack, ruefully, "I'm not even ornamental."

"Not even that," Violet assured him, mischievously; then her face softened.

Jack's eyes lighted with fun, only to become serious again.

"Chum, I've been thinking: it's the style at Princeton toward the end of Senior Year. I look around at the things there are for a fellow to do, and they seem like a jumble of hopeless odds and ends. I've no ambition; I wouldn't know what to take a hand at if I had."

His blue eyes were so earnest, so masterfully pleading with her, that her cheeks grew hot, and a thrill shot up the arm Jack placed his hand on.

"Little girl—"

"Jacky, *do* watch the road! Most certainly nobody would have you for *chauffeur*." And still further to maroon a dangerous moment: "I wish the shells were on the lake. It looks so smooth and sparkling and—"

"No," said Jack, in cheerful acceptance of defeat, "there will be no shells on the Loch for a long time. To-night there will be a scum of ice all over that smiling surface. It is turning colder already. . . . A glister of ice over a smiling surface. I wonder if *your* heart is like that, little chum?"

They whisked by the squat length of the boat-house. Jack moodily cut off the muffler, and the six cylinders

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assaulted the hill like a battery of artillery, and conquered like an aeroplane or a wingless bird. It seemed scarcely a wind-swept instant until they swung into Prospect Street and Clubdom.

And Jack was on the curb before an ivied wall and a gate with brass balls, smiling at her in his boyish way.

"Come," said he, holding out his hand to her. "They are feeding the animals."

A melodious echo sounded from the romanesque pillars of Alexander Hall across the moonlit campus. It is there that the Glee Club is wont to usher in Prom night with song. The long, motionless line of carriages and automobiles before the massive pile was even more eloquent of festivities behind the scenes. The lamps on the cabs, and the solar flares of the cars were especially suggestive of a grim pageant soon to burst into joyful light, color, and noise.

Even those two silk-hatted figures would not be striding ahead so purposefully on any other evening. They would be sauntering along in the good old Princeton slouch, something disreputable on their heads, a pipe or a bit of campus harmony in their mouths, mackinaws, and a general atmosphere about them of proprietorship of it all, coupled with delicious irresponsibility of a single one of this world's cares.

But they were conversing of other topics as they advanced westward.

"Pshaw! You're too much interested in stocks, and those mines out West, to know what it is to be in love. I don't believe *you* ever even send her flowers!"

"No," retorted Spenser. "What's the use of wasting flowers on a sister? If I got that demonstrative she'd think I was ill, and send me prescriptions."

"Let's cut the comedy, Kenneth," said the other, soberly. "I looked at her as she got out of your car at the Inn this evening. She is the most beautiful thing I

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ever saw. . . . With that one little curl struggling out from under her veil, and her cheeks glowing like wind anemones—”

“Poetical. The wind this time in February, combined with a sudden frost like to-night’s, and the breeze of a car, is rather apt to induce rush of blood to the jaw bones.”

“Jaw bones!” Jack began, and then concluded not to notice such insufferable prose. He began a chirpy whistle. It sounded, somehow, meditative, youthful, and full of hope.

Jack’s eye shifted from the silent line of lights across the quadrangle to where a few illuminated casements in Seventy-seven told tales of cheerful, inconsequential fellowship before a fire, or of books which were still giving up their secrets to the wiser brew. All around stood the solidity of collegiate Gothic, dominated by the soaring dignity of Sage Tower, like some great minister in the midst of a Norman keep. Arches every way one looked; and the whole frosted silver by the moon, even to the great, bare-limbed trees. Princeton slept; and her slumber is not disturbed by trifles.

Farther along Blair arose a momentary riot of voices, a snatch of a song; but the stillness was not even touched. The jovial outburst arose again, almost above their heads now.

“Garry, but they’re having a good time up there! . . . And in Dell Townsend’s room, too!” Jack cried, in quick sympathy. “The poor kid will be scared to death.”

“His funeral,” said Spenser, dryly. “Don’t let’s stop.”

Jack was looking up at the ruddy windows, a certain compassion on his face under the entry light.

“I’ve half a notion to go up and tell him it’s all right.”

“Nonsense! Come on; we’ll be late at the Inn.”

While Jack deliberated a sash of the room above was raised with a rattle, letting out a medley of conflicting voices and two tousled heads. The two fellows outside,

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who had stopped to listen, were abruptly addressed by one of the tousled heads.

"Where are *you* from?" in hazy authority.

"Please sir, we're just back from Joe Gish's preceptorial, sir," replied Jack, in mock humility.

"Who's that giving himself airs out there?" growled one head to the other. "Some hi-falutin' last year's Junior, confound him. Hey, you, you'd better come up; we want you."

"Hello!" cried another of the heads, surprised, "if it isn't Jack Holliday!" and disappeared like a Punchinello. A clatter on the stairs, and presently three bareheaded fellows shot out of the door and flung themselves on their victim, wringing his hands and belaboring him with glad cries.

The large, handsomely furnished study was a jumble of young alumni on their first reunion. As is unfortunately the case on such occasions of high good humor, not a few of them were, for the same old reason, a trifle over-boisterous. There had been a class banquet at the Nass—and other things. All about the room they sprawled, on window seats, chairs, the floor, their beaming, youthful faces on the prisoner. Their troubles forgotten for the nonce—law, medicine, business, or what not—they shouted jovially and all at once through the bluish haze from the pipes, offering suggestions to the cross-examination, and hissing the faint responses of the accused, a hardened criminal, no doubt—and a Freshman. Stoical, resigned, he sat, as sternly directed, on the end of the table facing the judge. Stoical, and in his pajamas, his blond head ruffled from the pillow. In the intervals he might be seen to glance longingly toward the open door of the chamber, from which he had been so brutally haled forth. That bed—!

The trial proceeded; the opposing counsel foamed and glared melodramatically at each other; the judge was indefatigable in his demands for "Order in the court!" and

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his beating of the table with a stein looted from the Nass. They tried that gory young monster with the bare feet and sleepy, dazzled eyes; put him on the rack of incomprehensible cross-examination—not necessarily from the lawyers for the state—oh no (for spectators, and even the judge, chimed in); found him guilty of heinous crimes, convicted him, and sentenced him. Throughout he was a strange blend of curiosity and embarrassment. Repeatedly had he to be commanded to:

“Wipe off that smile, sir—*wipe* it off!”

And was at last reconsigned, under the odium of judicial sentence, to bed.

The Class of Nineteen-umph were “using” that room. They had picked it out purely because the “bailiff” had leaned against the entry door and said he was “tired.” At present somebody was telling stories, and the cigarette smoke curled around the chandeliers, the pennants, and pictures on the walls, and even among the knick-knacks on the plate rail. A surprising number of the grads seemed to be acquainted with young Holliday. Perhaps he was more of a democrat than Spenser—who knows? Eventually they made a place of honor for the two undergraduates on the window seat.

“Hey, Bob, time’s up! Ring down the curtain on that, will you? Let’s hear something sane for a while.”

“Boys,” demurred Jack, his rugged face melting into a particularly engaging smile, “you know *I* can’t sing. It would kill you all. Allow me to introduce Signor Plançon Spenser, the great rival of Caruso for popular favor.”

Kenneth smiled in lazy dignity and reproof at his friend.

“I know,” grinned Jack, “you want to murder me. But you won’t. I’ll get a head start.”

Spenser, with his smooth-hewn features, yellow hair, and dark eyes, is certainly an admirable specimen of humanity to look at. As he sits there, smiling amused deprecation, we cannot but see that he has all the physical

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attributes to turn a girl's head or render him the idol of the football world. Indeed, he is such: the reigning all-American full-back. Well over six feet, built on the massive perfection of scale of Thorwaldsen's Jason, there is, nevertheless, scarcely a trace of heaviness in the leonine features. Even the yellow hair has a fineness of texture; and his lashes are long and silkily light in color, like a girl's. Be it noted, the Spensers are a fine old family. Their escutcheon comes down through the illustrious author of the *Faery Queen*. And this scion of the race does it full outward honor: a beau ideal of young American manhood, on the gridiron or in the ballroom. To see him is to admire his strength and beauty as one would that of some splendid Arabian stallion. He sat there even in this hubbub, his fur-lined coat thrown back from his evening clothes, coolly aloof; conscious of the admiration due a perfect animal, and utterly careless of it. He smiled in haughty good humor.

"All right, fellows. What shall it be?" then settled back leisurely in the cushions and sang "Mandalay" for them; and, in deference to avid applause, "Sweet Miss Mary." His voice had the clear boom of a bell, with the smooth timbre of a cello. Indeed, it is small wonder young Spenser was admired; his very aloofness was a charm.

When the twain took their leave, Jack, by some mysterious diplomacy, managed to lure the master of the revels of Nineteen-umph outside. His ruse succeeded, for most of the grads trooped down the stairs after them.

Outside the entry a passing Senior hailed Jack. Would they ever get to the Inn?

"Just a minute, Ken," urged Jack.

"Just *you*, Jack," stipulated the Senior. "*Alone*."

They conferred a moment, gravely.

"Well," concluded Convers, the Senior, "I suppose it has to be done."

Convers was bound for the Inn also, and the three

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moved off together. Holliday had an abrupt glimpse of Kenneth's face under a light.

"Oh, Ken, are you ill?"

The other shook his head in silence. Yes, it must have been a mistake.

II

PROMENADE NIGHT

ALL the strenuous mechanism beneath the lofty roof of the Gymnasium hung veiled by rosy films of draperies and flowers; even the stern air of regulated bodily toil had vanished beneath the volatile atmosphere of flowers and girls. Girls and flowers—why, the place had bloomed into an exotic softness and loveliness entirely feminine; and the air was heavy and intoxicating to youth with a perfumed sweep of life and beauty.

Young Holliday, with masterful politeness, extricated her from a fringe of admirers and seated her on a divan in the shadowed corner of a box. He had no mark for the changing throng of the waltz, as he lounged beside her in the cozy bower; his eyes rested on Violet's dainty profile with a spark of reminiscent futurity, and took no account of anything else. She was such a little aristocrat in the haughty mold of each delicate feature and the very poise of her pretty head. And she was flushed from the recent sally into the dance; her eyes sparkled with vivacity, and her breathing was soft and deep.

They sat the dance out. They observed. They talked. And, as talk will do, especially at a Prom, the subject veered to athletics. Violet asked him mischievously if it were not breaking training to dance all night.

"I suppose so," indifferently. "It's wrestling now."

"But, Jack, they said—what if that Yale middle-weight would 'get you' next week? You'd lose the championship and—"

"He won't. But that's of no consequence." A shade

PROMENADE NIGHT

of inexplicable bitterness entered his voice. "I guess it's all I'm good for. They say, 'Oh, he's an athlete,' and that covers a multitude of sins. . . . I'm very worthless, Sis, but—"

He paused suddenly, and the muffled swell of the music dominated the moment with its cadence. Violet turned her head toward him, startled; their eyes met in a shimmer of lights. The world seemed to rock with the orchestra leader's baton; then she felt her hand lost in his warm grasp; saw that the scorching power of his glance was gone, and that his eyes were kind and almost wistful.

"If—if—if you would—I might—dear little Sis"—and his voice trembled in his earnestness—"you are so clever. . . . You could keep me from being a burden to the world. . . . And I'm very fond of you, little girl."

The violet leaped into the depths of the girl's eyes; they became wells of tenderness and laughing mockery. But her hand seemed to return a shadow of his own warm pressure before she drew it gently away.

"Now you're talking nonsense again, Jack," said she, with a decisive note of irony. "Such a pretty romance it is making up in its own shaggy head! Perhaps they will publish it in a nursery picture book next to the 'Babes in the Wood,' and people will say, 'How refreshing! And so young and tender, too!'"

"I'm twenty-one," he muttered, aggressively, with the overdone eagerness of a schoolboy attempting to justify himself; the fragile ribs of the fan crunched suddenly between his hands. "Your brother is twenty-two; you are nearly nineteen. We are not children any more. And—and I should be such a useless loafer without you. I—I love you, little chum—"

A shadow intercepted much of the light that found its way into their cozy corner. Helpless, his eyes smoldered as Violet's partner led her out upon the floor and they whirled together into the noisy burden of the barn-dance, a thing he hated, and now with the greater cause. He

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clenched his teeth as he glanced at his neglected card, and went to seek an outraged partner.

Nevertheless, Jack had a splendid time at that Promenade. He was so used to being agonized by his sweetheart's pretty arrogance that any fresh rebuff slid off his consciousness like sleet from a slate roof. It was truly a jolly party, the five that alighted from Kenneth's car at the entry in Blair, and mounted to their study above. It was also long after two o'clock in the morning. They sat all together in the ample confines of the settle in front of the blazing logs on the fireplace, and made tea; and chatted gaily of more things than we could relate in a fortnight.

In passing we must express regret for slighting two very charming ladies; but as it is, neither the chaperon in her black charmeuse from Virot, nor her daughter, Miss Emily Townsend, occupies the center of the stage in this small comedy of errors. The reason we hesitate in passing would be perfectly evident to you, if you were Kenneth Spenser listening to the daughter's calm *débutante* voice and looking down at ebon-lashed blue eyes that might well take a man's breath with something cool and deep and heady. Add to this the ensemble of a cheek and neck and shoulders like warm ivory above the pale-blue gown—*well*, we were passing on.

They had hardly settled themselves, however, and the tea ball had just started on its insidious work, when there was an interruption from beneath the window.

"Oh, Holly—Jack Holliday! Stick y' bun out," rang out a voice through the crisp air of the winter night.

"H'o, Dan," replied Jack, in the same brevity of campus tone and ceremonial. "Come on up."

"It's 'way into to-morrow, Jack. Go to bed."

But nevertheless they heard a three-step-at-a-time mounting of the stair and a snatch of a whistle before the door burst in to a young fellow with a green shade over

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his eyes. He was wearing a black V-necked sweater in careless student mode over his soft shirt, and he had a book in his hand. He stopped inside the doorway as if turned to stone by the sight of the dress suits and the girls; and one could see that he was about to stammer an apology and beat a quick retreat. Jack leaped up hastily and grasped his arm to lead him to the group by the fire.

"I want you to meet the ladies, Dan."

Jack looked reassuring kindness in answer to the newcomer's accusing glance. The eyes of the young fellow with the green shade softened to the frank affection of Holliday's manner.

"Mr. Blair; one of my best friends." And he introduced Dan all around with affectionate earnestness. "He will be President of the United States when I am only sending my first blue ribbon to the Horse Show—or, at least, Congressman from Pennsylvania."

"I hope you do not always keep such unwonted hours at your studies, Mr. Blair," smiled the chaperone.

"No; not always, Mrs. Townsend," replied Blair, in a singularly musical voice, ill associated with the slangy colloquy of the window. He held the green shade politely in his hand, like a hat; and they found him a very attractive young man with his curly hair, thin, intellectual face, and pleasant blue eyes a trifle obscured by over-study. After his friend's earnest courtesy his embarrassment slipped completely away, and he chatted merrily with the rest. Jack made him sit down in his place on the settle, and had Violet pour him out some tea.

"You are from Pennsylvania, then, Mr. Blair?" said Violet. "I have just been there myself on a two weeks' visit, at X——"

"I hope you approve of my fellow-citizens, Miss Spenser?"

"Perfectly delightful; indeed they were. I had a lovely time. But the women are as tiresome as Chinese about their ancestors."

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"Madam," remarked Jack, "I'm rather proud of my Pennsylvania ancestry myself."

"See!" she cried. "It sticks! They're all alike, even if they never set foot on Pennsylvania soil. I don't care, sir, they're all perfectly stuck on themselves."

"Perhaps they have good reason to be," suggested Mrs. Townsend, a Virginian.

"Oh, well, perhaps," admitted Violet. "They *are* nice, and that particular hobby of theirs doesn't show ordinarily. . . . But, oh, Jack! I met your aunt there, and she was the dearest old lady: beautiful white hair, and such patrician features. She might have stepped out of the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles!"

"Yes," agreed Jack, an appreciative eye on Violet, "she might, indeed. I call her *Madame la Marquise*, and I love her."

"One of the few things you cannot be blamed for," retorted Violet.

The tea made its rounds once more.

"Won't you have more yourself, Jack? 'Speak for yourself, John,'" Violet inquired, the teapot hovering in her hand with what seemed to him the pleasantest solicitation in the world. He snatched up his cup and saucer from their place of deposit upon the mantel with boyish alacrity; then his eye noted how prettily the white round of wrist and arm wavered above the handle of the teapot.

"Wait till I eat the sugar out," he temporized, digging away industriously with a pitifully inadequate spoon.

"Jack Holliday, you're positively impolite. How long do you think I shall hold out this teapot for you?"

Jack finished the last of the sugar with exaggerated haste, and stood before her contritely enough; but his eye laughed into hers as she poured him another cup. It was a glimmer of mirth that shot from each to each like a charge of warm electricity. Dan noticed it, and was startled.

During this rollicking nonsense. and, in fact, through-

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out the evening, Kenneth's bearing was unnatural in the extreme. He talked and laughed with forced gaiety at times, only to relapse into gloomy silence when the attention of the others was elsewhere. At these intervals there settled upon the handsome features a betraying shadow of irresolute anxiety that altered the whole face without seeming to change a muscle.

Presently Jack, M. C., turned to Dan Blair.

"Dan, you had some rare adventures last summer. That trip of yours, you know. The ladies would see something funny in your most serious troubles, I'm sure."

Blair was quite agreeable. He had "made Lunnion" as a sort of helper with the cows on a cattle-steamer to pay for his passage—as *femme de chambre* to the duchesses of Jersey, he jocosely termed it; and he gave a highly humorous account of the brighter side of the poor British sailor's hardships with regard to "bunk and grub" that kept every one in a quake of laughter. An exciting brush in the galley with a demented Irish cook, who had evident homicidal intentions with a wicked-looking cleaver, told in Blair's inimitable style, had a decidedly tarry flavor.

"But why did you go abroad in such a forlorn way, Mr. Blair?" asked Violet, a delicious little murmur on her lips that was the essence of laughter, reminiscence of the luxury of a deck chair upon the promenade deck writ large in her eyes. "You're not a—a sociologist, are you?"

"Not in such deadly earnest as that," answered the young fellow, drolly. Then he added, without a shade of false pride: "But it was that way or not at all, Miss Spenser. My pockets have never suffered from the wear and tear of carrying much gold. My father is a 'molder' in the Pittsburgh iron mills."

The chat went on as merrily as before; but Jack, from his paternal point of vantage, with his shoulders against the mantelpiece, noted a subtle change in the demeanor of the girl he had known so long. It was such a faint

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change in Violet's share in the conversation that only the concentrated rays of long acquaintance and tenderness could possibly have marked it. Violet was too well bred to be offensive; nevertheless he regarded her somberly enough. It was only another phase of the torment of his enslavement in the proverbial dungeon with the walls of rose and sapphire. She looked up and saw the rebellion of that gaze; her own met it indifferently, indeed, but with a slow, cruel little curl at the corners of red lips that was plainly a defiance to his revolt, and a calm disregard of his unspoken criticism.

"Violet," he said, dissembling his disappointment in her, "won't you play me that air we liked so much at the Prom?"

She rose readily enough at his wish and settled herself upon the piano stool. He did not realize the conventional attitude he was adopting when he strayed over and rested his elbows on the top of the piano, unfeignedly watching her whilst she played.

It is not good for human weakness to know that one has supreme power over the mood and happiness of another; but Violet can hardly have read anything else into the undiluted adoration that she surprised in Jack's contemplation of her own lifted face when she finished. A roguish spark in her eyes, where his own were utterly submerged, awakened again the poignant bitter-sweet that this was Violet, and that he delighted even to be tortured by her. The eager chat still buzzed before the fire. He imprisoned her hand on the keys, and she felt the throb of his pulse as he murmured tenderly:

"Vi, you are *such* a little snob. But I love you. I can't help myself."

The girl's eyes were cast down to the medley her hands were weaving on the keys. Suddenly, for no reason at all, Jack laughed aloud with the most joyous note in the world, and she looked up at him, startled.

"What are you laughing at, sir?" with mock severity.

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"I wasn't laughing at you, Sis, I was only—thinking."

"Of what can you be thinking with that jumpy twinkle in your eye?"

"I was thinking—well, of some eyelashes and—"

"And what, sir?" The pink hovered in her cheeks as she smiled up at him.

"The loveliest little dimple ever was."

The girl's averted face was a Jacqueminot rose for color, her fingers still toying with a prelude.

"I wish you'd say something—anything," she murmured, after a pause.

"Anything. . . . Can I perform any other humble service? I'd say or do *anything* for *you*."

"Oh, Jacky," she laughed, "how you do remind me of Kenneth's collie dog! Such a hungry look!"

"I must have been born that way. I never could look at you without feeling that I could eat you—well, quite up."

The clock on the mantel struck three. Mrs. Townsend rose with malice aforethought and a polite solicitude.

"Oh, there are only Freshmen and Sophomores in this entry," was Jack's naïve reply, "and, besides, this is Prom night. Nobody has any business sleeping then, anyway."

Nevertheless, the lady arbiter pitilessly disintegrated the party and hustled the girls into their wraps. Jack managed surreptitiously to press a small gloved hand to his lips as he arranged the robes about a certain young lady in the tonneau, before he cranked up the engine for Kenneth; and the car swept away across the campus, blending the even, powerful purr of its six cylinders into distance like some monstrous, dragon-eyed wasp of the shadows.

Jack linked his arm silently in his friend's and piloted him up to the room again. They understood each other, these two. Holliday threw off his evening coat, and with crossed arms settled down upon the small of his back

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before the fire, while Blair, by long convention, filled a pipe from a jar on the mantel.

Jack sank into a reverie before the embers; Dan drew cozily on his pipe and watched his friend's face. Jack had turned off the light, and only the fire-glow illumined his features. It was not a face distinguished for beauty as was young Spenser's; it was too square, almost stubborn in line, with a broad, heavy forehead, and straight, rugged brows, marred on the left temple by a small but deep triangular scar like a blunt arrowhead. The rest of it was in keeping: the square, cleft jaw; the obstinate hint of an arch in a nose like that we see on the sculptured face of a Titus. Only the mouth and eyes belied the other features; the lips sensitive and curving readily with pleasure or sympathy; the blue eyes, where a smile was wont to start like a quiet sunrise, illuminating every lineament. Solidity—rugged, vital solidity—was the striking characteristic of young Holliday in every respect. But he was no cave man, nor even suggestive of such a reversion to type; his archetype was much rarer; the whole atmosphere about the young fellow was that of one who joys in the strong use of body and brain for its own sake. And withal a dreamer of dreams, almost a mystic, if you will; the wide-set eyes glowed, smoldered, and became obscured with some graver thought, or reflected fantasies from the red glow of the embers, all in swift alternation.

Presently he turned his head and smiled with the peculiar sweetness that was his individual charm.

"If you're going to write poetry now, I'd better beat it," suggested Dan, in alarm. "Especially if it's about purple eyes and starry hair."

Jack ignored the friendly banter. He locked Dan in a playful bear-hug and growled in his ear with fierce affection:

"I was just thinking what a lucky beggar you are, with that big, clean ambition of yours to be a great lawyer—

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and an honest man to boot. Sometimes they don't go together. So, you see, I'm busy breaking the Ninth Commandment."

Dan looked at him with a tightening of his pleasant mouth.

"You needn't, Jack. I have my way to make, and *I know it*; that's the point. It's harder to stay at the bottom of the heap than to fight to get to the top. There's more air there, my boy."

"Can't agree with you there. It's harder to *stay* at the top and not turn into a fossil or a sponge than it is to put your shoulder to the wheel of a Necessity you can feel. . . ."

Blair went over to the piano and ran meditative, practised fingers over the keys.

"Go ahead," approved Jack; "that's what Ken and I keep it for. I'm such a clumsy, stupid oaf that I can't play a note myself."

The piano gave utterance to something particularly delicate and expressive.

"What is that, Dan? It's very sweet."

"Knew you'd like it," rejoined the musician. "It's Mendelssohn—'The First Violet.'"

The two comrades' eyes laughed into each other; then became grave.

Dan laid his hand on his friend's shoulder and bade him good night. Jack bowed his head shamefacedly under the message of the manly, near-sighted eyes. As plainly as if Blair had uttered the words, that look declared:

"You may be a rich man's son and I a poor student working his way through college; you may be a member of a fine club, while I run the news stand at the Commons; you may have a long line of distinguished ancestors, while I do not know who my grandfather was; but you're a brick, old fellow, and I love you!"

III

A CRUMPLED ROSE LEAF

A TONGUE of flame flared up occasionally, to reveal the spacious comfort of the study, filming vividly for a short breath the glazing of the pictures in their dark, rich frames, and tingeing with night color the diverse pennants and the emblemed cushions of the settle; even bringing out in a trickle of fiery lines the gilt titles of volumes in the bookcase, and then blotting it all out in the general shade of the heavy furniture and hangings. Now and again the white model of a tiger stood out in cameo relief upon the mantel, its sculptured muscles and sinews sharply limned by the instantaneous gleam.

Jack looked up, dumb with surprise, at his room-mate standing there, his fur-lined coat half open, his muffler still about his neck. Kenneth was hatless; his face was pale, and his eyes shone feverishly.

"Oh, I *thought* I saw you looking at me queerly in the Exam; but when I saw the way you were talking to Freddy Convers just to-night, I—I was sure. . . ."

Holliday was stunned. He recoiled a step, and the look he cast upon his friend was almost loathing. Spenser saw it, and for a moment self-esteem returned sufficiently to straighten his broad back and raise a disdainful chin.

"Oh, I cheated; I'm ready to admit it. I had the whole paper covered," he resumed, defiantly. "What of it?" He sank upon the settle and turned his face aside. The fire-glow wove gilded strands in his hair as Jack gazed down at him, the trouble of his own face hidden in the shadow.

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"Ken, you've done an awful thing," he blurted out, at last. In such moments we are all children; it was the same boyish way one youngster might stand in horror of another. "But I haven't reported anything because I knew nothing. Are you sure nobody else did?"

"Sure?" cried Kenneth, turning his head suddenly at the reflective tone of the other's last words.

"Oh, what did you do it for? And why—" Jack's voice was halting with a regret which the other did not catch or comprehend. All the doubt in Spenser's face was swallowed up by relief, almost delight. He looked a Greek god in his splendid proportions, the fire-gleam sunning the chiseled features and glinting from his white teeth and sparkling eyes. He sprang up impulsively and caught Jack's arm as if seeking congratulation on his escape from dishonor. But Holliday's face was averted.

"Why did you tell me, when I might have known nothing?" came the muffled reproach.

"That's all right, old man," Kenneth rejoined, his accents ringing as heartily as at a good deed well done; but the other stood aloof and still as any statue.

A chill invaded Spenser's elation; pause fell like a blight between them. It is frightful how an atrophied moral sense may awaken behind the shutters of such a silence. Kenneth's inert conscience struck out vague talons of unrest, which pierced the lining of his reserve and spurred him on to seek justification, even amelioration, in speech.

"Jack, you know. . . . Oh, don't you see I wouldn't have done it if it hadn't been the last year? . . . And when I sat down to the stuff the night before my head was all in a muddle with it. . . . I don't take to books the way you do, and I suppose I didn't pole it out the way I should. . . . Then there was the football season. . . . Oh, I know you were at it, too; but then—Jack, you see how it was?" he pleaded with outstretched hands to the mute figure. "I didn't know the first thing about Public Finance; I

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didn't want to be worried by conditional exams and tutoring, and I could have passed it with two weeks' work. . . . Jack, the last year, old man . . . and I'd have worked months if I'd known you'd feel this way. . . ."

His voice died away. All this seemed so inadequate in presence of the speaking rebuke of that back.

"Honesty's the best policy, after all," concluded Spenser, after a pause.

"Good God!" cried Holliday, turning upon him with flaming indignation. "The best *policy*? Is that all it means to you? Isn't it a *part* of you? . . . And you a Spenser?"

He sat down stiffly, deliberately, beside Spenser, his clenched hands bulging out his trousers pockets. His face limned out in the firelight as craggy as an ocean cliff at sunset. Kenneth, whose good-natured, leonine dignity was returning in spite of this outburst which he did not understand—a good humor which was even yet compounded with some of the pleasure he felt in his relief—Kenneth regarded his friend with the well-bred solicitude, almost impersonal, that one feels for the haggard breakfast face of an acquaintance afflicted with insomnia. Jack raised his head and caught a gleam of this polite curiosity; the blood rushed darkly to his own face as though *he* were the man who had cheated. Kenneth rose to go; he might have believed himself intruding upon some one's shame. Jack choked, and then cried out in a strange, hoarse tone:

"Oh, don't you see I have to report you *now*? Why did you tell me? I needn't have known."

Kenneth stopped, half risen, his face a blank sheet in the firelight, upon which a series of conflicting expressions flashed, as through the flickering film of a stereopticon. Stupor, surprise, contempt, anger, and then a fixed astonishment without measure, appeared in succession upon the handsome mask. Slowly he straightened his long limbs with the air of one who does not believe his ears.

A CRUMPLED ROSE LEAF

"Can't you see it makes no difference whether I found it out at the time—or afterward?" went on Jack's strained voice. "I'm on the Senior Council; how can I do otherwise?"

A flash of comprehension and wrath distorted Spenser's visage into the malign beauty of some powerful feline creature which lusts to crush and tear; he flung his gloves upon the floor and took one lithe stride toward Holliday, his hands balled into knotted marble. The venomous black eyes flared as close as might be to the level blue ones; but Holliday moved not a muscle. Spenser drew a quivering breath and stood up.

"You damned Pharisee!" he snarled, bitterly, a *vox humana* on the pedal bass of a satanic organ. He strode blindly to the door and paused there, his hand on the knob. Then he came back slowly to the fire, his anger blown out like a candle in a blast of desperation. He reasoned, he pleaded, threatened, expostulated, appealed to childhood days. He could see the pain he was giving his friend only in the wan curve of Jack's mouth; he began to watch that mouth as an augury of hope while he pleaded. It was no use; Jack stirred in his seat, and said, simply:

"I'm sorry."

Kenneth hurried on to paint the odium of his position; what grief it would cause his sister, that sister who was his whole family, and correspondingly dear to him. Holliday's eyes wavered for the first time as if blinded by the dying fire-gleam; then went back moodily to his reading of the embers.

"I'm sorry," he said again, steadily. "You should have thought of her before."

Kenneth read an agony in the wince of the other's lips, and pushed his advantage, watching his friend sinking together upon the settle like a pallid old man. Finally he blurted out something about having a little shame for one whom he would like to make his brother-in-law.

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Holliday drew himself suddenly erect in the seat, and there was a world of indignation and scorn in his violent retort; he was thoroughly aroused.

"It's *you* should think shame to use such an argument!"

It was astounding how the revelation of the last quarter hour had come between the two—friends from boyhood. It could only be accounted for by a strain of iron intolerance in Holliday's very bone and blood, something out of his own control. There was only too much truth in Kenneth's reproach of Pharisaism. He turned a baleful glare of disgust upon Kenneth; but it softened before the semblance of his sweetheart's eyes. He looked into the fire.

"I'm sorry," he murmured.

No recourse was left; Spenser felt that he had degraded himself with no return whatever. He dragged himself from the room in a sort of apathy.

The big fellow stood a full moment with his hand on the balustrade, brows contracted in thought. Slowly his eyes came back to the door with a flare of resentment in them.

"You're a good friend, *you* are," he gritted. "A *good* friend. Now see who's a good loser—you—or I. Thank God you aren't in the family!"

Spenser turned away with a proud lift of his fine head, and descended the stairs.

"What's the odds?"

IV

FIRELIGHT

BEFORE Jack's fire chaos had just been created in the world of boyhood. A comrade of all his days, almost a brother, to whom the boyish imagination and vision of the younger man had been wont to impute qualities no less noble and heroic than Kenneth's superb physical semblance seemed to vouch—this comrade had just swept aside for a moment from his respected personality the drapery of a dignified reserve, and what he had seen there appalled young Holliday's intolerant nature, and grieved him more than we consider it wise to measure. The spotless Bayard lay dead in this boyhood hero; in his stead brooded a changeling, dusky-winged shape of weakness and moral torpor. It was long before he thought of what his own share must be in disclosing the shame of this to others—few it is true—but still others. His own heart was half sick.

All idea of sleep had flitted away. The fire almost died out while he sat there motionless, his head in his hands, before the fitful, livid flicker. All he saw in it now was a pair of dark eyes with a shade of violet in the depths, eyes which regarded him with an unchanging horror, scorn, and hatred. She would not understand. Kenneth was her only brother; and her father and mother had been lost years ago at sea with *La Gascogne*. The clock measured off a sonorous four, and still he did not move. On the hearth the embers sank together, glowing dully, a ruddy mockery upon the silver and china of the dainty tea table which had been the focus of merriment so recently.

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There was a determined little knock at the study door. Jack paid no heed, and it became loud and insistent. Some fellow just home from the Prom, thought he, indifferently; for indeed the campus was thrumming with the motors of the last lingerers for "Home, Sweet Home," and the frosty ground echoed sharply the rapid clatter of iron-shod hoofs. Let him come in, or go away, was Holliday's apathetic mood. He did not see or hear the figure which hesitatingly pushed the door open and came to look down at him as he sat oblivious; but a faint fragrance of dying roses smote upon his senses like a fairy dagger.

Outside the Inn the last motors were whisking away, leaving their knots of Promenade folk to dissolve gradually in the lobby and upon the stairs—the chaperon beaming satisfaction at a task accomplished, the student reluctant in his farewells, the pretty bud demure and dimpling to the last.

Two faces only seemed without a share of the common happiness. Young Spenser stood beside his sister on the stairs; both silent, and Violet very pale.

"It would all come out in the morning, anyway," he muttered, "and—and it seemed better for you to—know beforehand."

He looked away miserably at the merry groups below, and did not see the thought painting itself on the girl's anxious face. She raised her head finally, resolution coming into her eyes and the seal of her lips. Only a few words in his ear; but Kenneth looked up, startled out of himself.

"You—you—but see here, Sis, you can't do that!"

"The car?" she inquired, ignoring his expostulation.

"It's at the garage—so that settles it."

"Very well, we'll do without. My cloak, please. It's upstairs."

"No," he said, shortly. "You're out of your mind. The thing's impossible."

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"Then I'll get it myself."

She ran up the stairs leaving him speechless, his hand half raised, his brows knotted with trouble. When she returned it was only to meet another low-toned flood of entreaty from her brother.

"Think of yourself, Sis," he concluded; "if—"

Her only response was to hold up the cloak for his assistance. Their eyes met in a long moment of pitted will; then, almost mechanically, he helped her into it.

"Come," she repeated, moving toward the door. He grasped her arm and halted her; but she quietly extricated herself. Their eyes met again.

"There's no other way, Kenneth," softly.

"If you think I'm going to let my sister—"

Her cool glance ranged the lobby, and she returned some one's bow.

"Kenny," she resumed to him, her face raised to his in confident appeal. "You wouldn't have me go alone. You're my big brother, you see, and I know."

She stood on tiptoe and kissed him, and was out of the door before he could interpose. He swung after her with an inarticulate exclamation of anger and helplessness.

They stood together beneath the entry light, the dim casements of his and Jack's rooms above them. Kenneth had exhausted his last resource of persuasion and entreaty.

"And you're going to—"

"Yes, and you must stay down here."

"No," he muttered.

"Yes," she persisted, with a half smile of purpose and encouragement, her hand on his arm. "Yes, Kenneth. After all, it's only *Jack*."

He sprang up the stair after her, nevertheless, obstinate, in desperation. She turned to him at the top, the same tender, nameless smile on her lips.

"After all," she whispered, "it's—*only—Jack*."

Kenneth paused, his resolution wavering. She glanced

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at him again, brightly; smiled; swept back to the door, and knocked. No answer. She knocked again. He strode forward, and stopped, gripping the balustrade, her parting words still ringing in his ears:

"After all, *it's only Jack.*"

A softening came over Spenser's face.

"*Only Jack.*"

He wheeled deliberately and descended the stairs; but only to pace the frozen drive outside in a fever of impatience and conflicting purpose.

Jack started,—and gazed up at Violet in amazement, his head in disorder, his face haggard. Her ball gown still showed beneath the long fur cloak; but her hair was twisted in a heavy coil about her head and was covered by a scarf. Her cheek was pale, but mantled under the astonished scrutiny like a thin flake of alabaster before a flame. Plainly she was at a loss for words, yet when she spoke her voice held more of the imperious charm than ever.

"My brother?" was all she said; and came around to sit half facing him upon the settle. Jack sprang up as if merely to lay another log upon the andirons; but his face was reddened with something besides stooping above the glow when he turned to the girl. The questioning gaze encountered his with an impatient disregard of his trouble, her face raised like the innocent, rose-lipped cup of a lily.

"This is no place for you," he said abruptly at last, "as you must know."

"My brother," she repeated, unwaveringly. "I must know why you are making him so miserable."

Holliday groaned and flung himself down so that the settle creaked.

"My brother," came the clear, imperious, feminine tones. "Why must you disgrace him so in his last year? He has just told me everything."

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"*He sent you!*" cried Jack, astounded at this fresh evidence of baseness.

"No," replied the girl, evenly. "*I came.*" Sudden tears blinded her, and her voice trembled. "*I came. I'd do anything for him, even this. He's all I have—mother, father, friend.*"

Jack's face contracted in utter sympathy, his eyes adoring. Impulsively his hand went out to her; but she resumed, unseeing.

"*I came. . . . He said it was best for me to know, for it would all come out in the morning. He—he told me not to worry, but to go right to sleep. Sleep!*"

"He—?"

Jack's expression was a struggle between disbelief and sympathy; abruptly it set as against the sear of a surgeon's knife.

"*I—I don't b—*" he began, then burst out in an ugly, desperate way. "*Oh, he sent you! So he's a coward, besides!*"

A wave of scarlet dyed her cheek and throat. She brought down one little foot viciously upon Jack's.

"Tell me," she said, in a blaze of haughty anger.

Jack gazed at her reproachfully, then in dumb misery. Violet was a clever girl, much too clever, in fact; she knew just how to manage young Holliday in such a mood.

"Tell me, Jack," gently, anxiously, coaxingly.

The boy's heart responded instantly to that semblance of kindness. With quiet bitterness he begged her not to think that he would betray her brother if there were anything else possible. He went to rummage in the top drawer of his desk, and brought her one of the printed examination papers used in the college work. At the bottom of the page she read: *I pledge my honor as a gentleman neither to have given nor received assistance during this examination.* She looked up at him inquiringly as he held out his hand for the slip.

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"Yes, Kenneth put his name to that pledge," he said, and turned away from the ebbing color of her face.

Then he went on, like a lawyer acting as his own defense in a trial for murder, to tell her how every Princeton man was bound on his honor not to cheat in examinations himself, and to report to a student council every instance of cheating which came under his observation. Whoever stood convicted, the council secretly notified, and the man faded from the college life without any one but the small council being the wiser. He even told her how the professor in charge was wont to leave the room wholly to the students, and merely returned for the papers; how the fellows could go out together for a smoke or a stroll, and could talk to each other on whatsoever subject they chose, provided honor governed it all. But now Jack was in heart-horror over the institution of which he and his comrades were justly used to be proud.

"Is that all?" asked Violet, patiently, lovelier than ever in the pallor of her concern for her brother.

Jack was as patient as she; his eyes met her own, dark with a pity which had something dogged about it. He would have explained even further the exigencies of the case, had she not laid her hand softly on his arm, her expression gentle, feminine finality.

"But, Jack, it's Kenneth! It's my *brother!*" And her voice held a sweet, pleading quality that unmanned him. His arm trembled under her little hand. "Oh, Jack, it's *my* brother; all the rest makes no difference."

Her pretty variation of emphasis was her only argument, her merciful woman's logic, old as the world, her only rebuttal; yet the firm structure of right and wrong tottered before young Holliday. He sought refuge in his adoption of obdurate reserve, and the girl was not slow to take umbrage.

It was startling how closely brother and sister resembled each other in their volatile gusts of anger. There was the same shadow in her eyes, the same timbre in the low

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voice, the same grace in the lithe form which sprang erect before him. There was the same haughty impulse to leave him in her anger, the same return to rational consciousness at the cold touch of the door knob.

A long moment she lingered by the door; then crept slowly back to the settle as if crushed by her foreboding. It was a pathetic figure which curled up despairingly in the opposite corner of the seat; but Jack's face was obstinately averted. The fire licked fiercely at the charred bark of the new log, crackling in muffled, sullen mockery.

A tremulous sob made him hold his breath in a panic. Then a voice with the quivering essence of tears in it cried out:

"Oh, I wish my mother were here!"

Jack had his arm about her before he knew it, and the overwrought little face buried itself as naturally as could be in the white waistcoat. He felt the strong heave of her sobbing fill his arm, and drew her close with heaven knows what inane words of comfort. The small hand that he sealed unresisting to his lips left a bitter-sweet tang of the salt tears there, and wet his cheek, against which he held it long. But no remedy for her real trouble occurred to him; it was all very well to call her "dear little Sis," and beg her not to cry; but the silent, racking heave of her distress gradually ceased only of itself. She pushed him away, indeed, but gazed pitifully up into his face with swimming bright eyes that were more beautiful than ever. Jack had a longing to kiss away two great crystal drops which clung to the silken gloom of those lashes.

"Oh, Jack, if you really did care at all, you wouldn't ruin my poor brother so!"

He drooped his head before the beseeching glamour of her look. She arose and stood a few paces in front of him, silent. His head was bowed a long time; when he did raise it, he could not lower his eyes again. There she stood, radiant, both white arms outstretched to him,

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head tilted just a trifle backward on the lovely neck with the sweetest invitation in the world.

"What do you want me to say, dear Jack? Tell me, and I'll say it as often as you like . . . *if* . . ."

"Jack," she murmured, "why are you so afraid of me? I'm not afraid of you."

Violet looked down at the bent head with its crisp rumple of dark hair; and toyed absently with the square clench of Jack's fingers on the arm of the settle, as a child might have played innocently with the unsheathed claws of a lion. It is doubtful if Violet's face ever consciously disclosed the real content of her thoughts. That lovely mask either visioned forth something more, something less, something entirely different, than the actual feelings of the soul behind; or, again, it was inscrutable, a delicious cameo design of a Sphinx in rose marble. It was seldom indeed that the joy, the meaning, the pathos sometimes mirrored upon her features and in her wonderful chameleon eyes, really belonged to the single soul sleeping behind them. The fair screen might have been an ancestral pier glass, shadowing out the sadness and delights of generations gone. On it could be read, at times, a fathomless love that might have been, or may be, somewhere; but by no means assuredly in the cool spirit of Violet herself.

"Why are you afraid, Jacky boy?" she insisted, so that he was compelled at last to raise his eyes to the mischief lurking in the warm amethyst. Violet might never have had a care for her brother, if one took the curving drollery of her cheek for witness. The sweetness of its mockery irritated him with a strange, wild subtlety that was half delight. It made him forget the object of this unprecedented, lone visit of a young girl to a student's room in the small hours of the morning; made him forget his own distress, everything but that she was teasing him so prettily; that there was nothing but the joy of his love and her raillery in the world. It was a game at which

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they had often played before, with no definite consequences.

He sprang erect. Neither knew how it happened; but the next instant was a mist of time—the first kiss!

"Dearest love," he murmured, watching the shy lashes fluttering back from the purple-black abysses of forgetfulness, forgetfulness of all but one thing. Yes, she had forgotten her brother; and she loved *him*, John Holliday! He knew it now! "How beautiful you are, sweetheart! Without feeling? Why, you're the sweetest thing that ever looked like snow with a fire glowing through it that never melts it! It's not a girl I'm loving, dearest, it's a rose angel."

She clung the closer around his neck; then buried her face against his shoulder. He pressed his lips to the veil over her hair, wondering vaguely at the crimson tide that tinted the smooth neck and shoulders and burned in the tip of each little ear. She murmured faintly against his breast.

"Jacky, I must go! I've been most—improper. Whatever will you think of me? What would *people* think?"

Holliday was charmed by this new, shy phase. Always she had been the self-possessed, imperious one. Yet he felt vaguely that he loved *her*, not merely her moods, her sweet person, her dazzling inconsistencies; he loved *her*, a something he held in his grasp, which yet eluded him.

"What would people think? That's easy," replied Jack, with cheerful carelessness, holding her off at arm's length. "If His Royal Highness the Dean knew that the loveliest girl in the world was detained by brute force in J. Holliday's room at four-thirty A.M., and—horrors! had actually the temerity to kiss him when he wasn't looking, J. Holliday would receive a small token by the morning mail containing a free ticket to the back staircase subway out of college life. *Comprends-tu, mignonne?* But what do we care?"

"You would be expelled?" she breathed, her eyes di-

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lated with horror, snatching away the hand he held against his cheek as if suddenly burnt. "And it would be all my fault!"

Violet recoiled; the hand went to her brow. Then she ran to the casement. Somewhere outside she heard a sound as of a thigh slapped in heavy mirth, and a gruff, good-natured laugh came up to her. A measured tread crunched by on the drive below the window, and was gone. She shuddered, and shrank back to Jack.

"Expelled!" she repeated. "And it would be all my fault!"

His arm pressed her soothingly.

"No, no! Nobody knows but you and me, and we won't tell. Your fault? It's nobody's fault but—"

A shaft of pain sprang from his eyes to hers like a reflection. Violet went pale to the lips and turned her face away.

"Never mind, little girl. . . . We've both been hit pretty hard. . . . But no one will know about him but you and me, and the other fellows on the Council will never tell." The softened look of eyes and lips changed swiftly to a rugged anger. "But he had no business sending his sister to clean up his dirty mess. It was a cowardly thing to do!"

Violet struggled out of his arms and pushed blindly away.

"Oh!" she cried brokenly, and stood with her eyes covered.

"Yes, it was the action of a coward and a sneak," he went on stubbornly, his look fixed and dogged, all the innate intolerance of the man struggling to the surface.

The girl raised her head and looked, bewildered, with quivering lips, at the set scorn of the rugged features. Slowly the same expression invaded her own face, a much bitterer one, with a subtle film of disdain upon the smooth pallor. Her scorn seemed to pinch her nostrils and lips; and she was looking, not at a figure in vacancy, as had

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Holliday, but at the young man himself. He looked at her, startled, and would have taken her hand. She avoided his grasp, as if it were a defilement.

"What's the matter, dearest?" he begged. "You know I love you."

Again the rosy feeling tinged the girl's face.

"Oh, Jacky boy," she entreated, "if you left college—there are only these three months more, dear—you wouldn't have to report Kenneth, would you? You wouldn't be a student any more," she argued desperately, her lovely brow and eyes lit by an internal light. She stood humbly beside him and pressed his arm tremblingly with both her own.

"Yes, I might do that," he murmured absently, all his attention rapt upon the face against his shoulder. Then his stubborn mind began to take heed of what he was saying. "I might. . . . But I won't. It wouldn't be fair."

The girl's face looked suddenly tired; her lips drooped at the corners, and the light seemed extinguished in her eyes by a great weariness. She dropped the heavy arm in its linen sleeve and sank back upon the settle.

"It's true; if I were fired to-morrow," he pursued, as if to himself, "I'd be under no obligation then to report anybody. . . . But it wouldn't be fair." A kind of cold anger against his fallen ideal hardened his eyes, an impersonal, pitiless justice. "It would be robbing him of his deserts. He did it himself, didn't he? He knew he was bartering away his honor as a gentleman. Let him take his medicine; it's the only way. . . . And he ought to be drummed out to public disgrace for sending you to me—trying to crawl out like a cad."

"He didn't know; he didn't know! He's my brother. I know he didn't realize what he was doing." Violet was weeping quietly.

"Yes, he did," began Holliday stubbornly, then broke off in self-horror on perceiving that Violet was crying.

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He hastened to draw away her hands from her face. "Forgive me, Sis. It's an utter brute I am. Of course he's your brother. I wouldn't have hurt you for anything."

The girl shrank from him with a cry, and sprang erect, her face flaming.

"Love you, John Holliday! I must have been crazy!" Every word breathed loathing. She thrust the midnight blaze of her eyes close up to the young fellow's dazed face. "I hate you, do you hear, *hate* you!"

Her voice quivered up and caught in a sob, vibrant with passion; then, with abrupt transition, she sank to her knees, laughing and crying in the smothered fashion of a mad woman, her face buried in the cushions of the settle. The rapid crackling of footsteps upon the snow-crust came up from below the windows; a thump, as of someone springing hastily from bed, struck a hollow note on the floor above. Jack stood dumbly before the fire.

Violet ran to the still, dazed figure.

"Oh, Jack! What have I done?"

The boy seemed hardly to understand or care. He turned from her coldly. The heavy beat of feet sounded on the stairs now. He sat down carelessly upon the settle.

"It's easy to deceive me," he said with subdued bitterness. "I don't know how to suspect anyone of a thing I wouldn't do myself."

Spenser saw the night-proctor wheel sharply and rush into the entry. He sprang from the adjacent doorway into which he had stepped momentarily to conceal his presence, and stood in the drive, dazed, watching the lights burst out in windows close at hand. Then, with an imprecation, he dashed up after the man, through the knot of half-roused students in chamber robes on the landing. He caught a glimpse of Jack through the open door, facing them with pale quiet.

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As he was about to exclaim angrily, he saw Jack push some one aside, and a girl's figure brushed past him. The students parted before her on the stairs, and she was gone.

He overtook his sister outside the door. She recognized him with a sob of relief and stumbled into his arms. Others were following him down the stairs; he heard their footsteps; and in sudden panic he caught her up like a child and bore her away through Blair Arch. He had come to University Place before his calm senses returned to him, and he set her on her feet, panting out incoherent interrogation.

"What was the—the—?"

"Oh," she sobbed, "I'm ashamed! Why didn't I stay?"

The situation dawned on Spenser. For the first time he noted that Violet's face and gown were bundled in some strange wrapping. He fingered the rough fabric.

"The couch cover!"

"Yes, yes! Jack made me—"

"Jack!"

Spenser looked back. The girl felt the hand on her arm tremble, and divined an inner struggle.

"I must go back!" she cried in quick response. "He was so—they will—"

They stood stock-still, gazing each into the other's dim face. . . . A figure emerged upon Blair steps, and the panic for his sister seized upon the man again. He swept her away in spite of herself.

She buried her face in the dusty cover and burst into tears as he hurried her away.

V

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Masterly done:

The very life seems warm upon her lip

O, thus she stood,

Even with such life of majesty (warm life,
As now it coldly stands), when first I woo'd her!

—*A Winter's Tale.*

JACK'S father entered the study with the purposeful rapidity that was characteristic of him. He glanced at Jack as he set down his silk hat upon the center table, not even offering to shake hands; then pursued his uninterrupted way over to the large, flat desk in the bow-window. His secretary, a small, alert, youngish man, though surprised at his employer's unprecedented abdication of the reins of power in the Street at this time of day, took the opportunity to hand him a number of personal letters culled from a voluminous mail. Mr. Holliday glanced over them rapidly, pausing at one only. This he picked up again after he had finished the others, his eyes narrowing. He scribbled a line at the foot of the sheet.

"Take this to Knox at the Hoffman House, if you please," he said curtly to the secretary, holding out the paper. "If Knox isn't there, take it to Hadley & Griscom, on Wall Street."

The man went out, nodding pleasantly to Jack as he passed.

"Good morning, Tingley," replied Jack, with an abstracted friendliness. The papers still crackled under his

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father's hands in the sunny alcove; but the son remained humped together in the big leather chair before the glowing egg-coal in the open grate. From outside came the distant mumble of the city, with the ordinary noises of Fifth Avenue just below the windows: the ceaseless insistent, muffled clamor, a massive, many-cycled, bass whirl of passing motor vehicles, with their accompanying discordance of honking horns or rattles. As a rare variation a great horse dray might clatter past.

Mr. Holliday came suddenly out of the alcove, and stood with his hands resting on the center table, looking at the haggard, sleepless face of his son. He measured the weariness and suffering there, and at this unobserved instant one might have seen a strange softening pass over the father's face and center in the keen eyes. A soundless word was formulated on his lips, as though a constraint fell over him and made him dumb, except for that fleeting intensity in his eyes—nameless, momentary, as though crushed back by the clenching of the hands on the table. When he spoke, not a hint of this emotion was in his voice.

"Well, I see you're here."

"I came up on the nine-forty-two train, sir," answered the boy, rising with a stoic apathy and approaching the table.

"You are entirely satisfied, I presume, with your little dabble in the mire, and especially with the wide publicity you have attained in the noon editions?" John Holliday, Sr., always spoke in this well-chiseled, deliberate urbanity of manner, whether his words were honied or venomous.

Jack did not reply, but bowed his head toward the table without anything more than a compression of the lips. His eyes noted with impotent detail how the morning sun, shining through the stained cathedral glass in the top of the bow-windows, struck down upon the agate-like polish of the mahogany. It seemed that

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a furnace was glowing in the depths of a vast grave—a fire whose constant flame showed red and green and purple, as if beneath the faintest of films.

"I am sure you never forgot for an instant," went on the politely pitiless tones, "that you happen by some strange chance to bear the name of Holliday."

The boy looked across the table at his father with the dumb, hopeless gaze of an animal tortured. Then his face set in lines of haggard repose, and his eyes met his father's scrutiny with a certain pride of suffering.

At times there is in family resemblance a pathos too deep for tears. It was as though Nature, great tragic weaver, had knit father and son together in a similar pattern of frame and feature, only to bar them asunder by the subtler tissue of mind and spirit.

Even as a child it had never occurred to Jack to call this man with the sardonic eye beam "Daddy"; a man whose words might at the same time flow like soothing oil and scald like vitriol. Their mutual attitude was the eternal misunderstanding of two temperaments. No, Jack did not call his father "Dad"; nor was it from him he got his kindly, sensitive nature or the strangely sweet smile that seemed all his own.

The boy broke the pause by clearing his throat huskily.

"Father," he said, with a certain proud reserve, "you must believe me when I tell you that last night I did nothing which was not entirely worthy of a Holliday."

"Young gentlemen are in the habit of entertaining young women in their rooms at four in the morning? Are utterly blasé about having the charming visitor shriek for her own amusement, so as to draw as large a reception party as possible? It is quite a common occurrence, then?"

Mr. Holliday did not sneer; it was the heartless polish of the words which seared like a razor edge drawn across shrinking flesh. Jack choked.

"I know it looks queer. But you must believe me—on the word of a Holliday."

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Holliday, Sr., showed a certain appreciation on his cold features for the erect head and level eyes of Holliday, Jr.

"Who was this young woman, then, John?" he asked, pertinently. "She seems to have left you with the entire burden of publicity."

"I can't tell you that, sir." A flush crept into the boy's face at the other's incredulous expression.

"Then, if your intentions were entirely honorable, why does the lady conceal her identity? You must admit it is queer."

"I'll explain it all. I—I was— Father, if you'll promise not to let any one else know, I'll clear the whole thing up to you. I can't do it without at least giving you an idea of who—she was. Will you, father? Will you promise?"

"Young man, there's no sense or reason in what you say. Why should I wish to know except to clear my name? Otherwise it's absolutely immaterial to me. . . . Come, now, it is not necessary to be such a Don Quixote, such a prig. Tell me who the young lady is, and perhaps she will be kind enough to dissipate this ugly scandal. If not—"

"I can't do that," cried Jack, desperately. He leaned far over the table so that his father saw the unwonted shadow beneath the son's cheek-bones and the dogged pain in his eyes. "You'll have to take my word of honor, father. There's no way the thing can be cleared up publicly. I'm sorry it happened. But it was none of my fault."

The older man rounded the table and seated himself in the chair Jack had just quitted, methodically parting the skirts of his frock coat. His face was unmoved from its repose as he took out a cigar-case, chose a cigar, leisurely clipped the end, and as quietly held the match flame to it for a long moment. Jack was dimly proud of this iron-bound, powerful personality that was his father.

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At the fringe of his mental suffering vibrated a fiber of admiration for the granite composure of the flame-lit countenance, an awe of the concentrated energy which he knew the man could and did bring to bear upon the material world. But the lethargy of his night of distress wiped off, as from a slate, this superficial tinge of his expression. After all, *he did not know this man*. There was absolutely no bond of sympathy between them; even their lives had been spent apart. Mr. Holliday's real offspring might be said to be Financial Power.

"It will not surprise you"—Holliday, Sr., thrust a measured wedge of speech into the pause—"when I tell you that under the circumstances, whether your conduct has been spotless, as you say, or not, I cannot but condemn your attitude." He glanced up at his son, and continued coldly: "When a man has an unsullied integrity, he uses every effort to insure that nothing occurs to cast the slightest shadow upon it. If anything should intimate scandal, such a man would never rest until the light of day shone through the whole matter." The speaker's face froze to an icy mask, and the keen, narrowed eyes came to focus on his son's face like two bluish crystals of carborundum, harder and more pitiless in their scorn than steel itself. "Your attitude, I say, is incomprehensible to any honorable man. It argues but one thing; you understand what I mean. It bites to the quick to find one's own blood so tainted!"

He examined the whitening ash of his cigar with calm solicitude, and held another match to it in fingers as steady as rock.

"In other words," he continued, "I'm utterly ashamed of you as my son."

He glanced up to see why Jack made no reply to his unprecedented lapse from irony to earnestness. The boy was half sitting, half leaning against the table, with his hands behind him, his face raised to a large oil painting above the fireplace. It was as though the blind were

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seeing a spirit, so abstracted was the haggard vision. The cigar stopped halfway to his father's lips. Wonderment crossed the stern features, only to be hardened into as near an expression of irritation as they ever wore.

"'Twould be the better for a little more light," the financier remarked with sardonic politeness, switching on a swath of white electricity at the foot of the picture, and returning deliberately to his seat. Honeyed sarcasm filmed his lips with a half smile. "Beautiful, is she not? Sargent never did anything superior to that. It's quite as though she were alive and looking down at you."

Something knotted the man's brow; he tossed the cigar into the grate and drew his hand over his thick, iron-gray hair.

"Yes, your mother was beautiful. She was twenty when she sat for that picture—twenty, and it was the year before you were born. She was a Randolph."

The irony came back imperceptibly into his words and manner, although his eyes remained upon the picture.

"Perhaps you think she had some regard for me when she, sole heiress to a fine old Virginia homestead, married me, a poor devil of a lawyer from Pennsylvania. Perhaps you think so. Continue to think so. You ought to know whether she cared for me; you had her very look about the mouth a moment ago"—with a subtle bitterness entirely strange to the man of iron. "You are more like her than herself. She had that same far-away folly in her gaze that you had just now—the same hollow—sullenness—no—yes, sullenness—on her face six months before she died, and the same drawn lips. Old Dr. Anstruther said she died of a broken heart. People don't die of broken hearts nowadays; hers was pure obstinacy. . . .

"Oh, you two are alike! She loved the country; you cried like a baby six years ago when Montemaior was sold and I built in New York. You never remembered your mother, or how she loved the place, yet you cried as though some one had put out one of your eyes. She used

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to delight in mooning out of the window at the lightning during a thunder storm. She would laugh and clap her hands at a sun mote through the clouds, where there was—nothing. You have her very expression sometimes: things far off—clouds, stars, ships on the ocean—seem to hypnotize you both, make you open your mouths, forget you are alive. It was bad enough in a woman. Sometimes I wonder how a son of mine could inherit such a weakness!"

Holliday, Sr., frowned at the sad, luminous regard the boy bent upon him.

"Good God!" he cried, with a flash of annoyance. "Look at me like a *man*, not a saint in a church window!"

Jack's jaw hardened; some of his apathy left him in the face of this unusual testiness. It was as if the morning's events had unsettled his father's rigid self-control. But the cold glitter softened in the son's eyes when they rested on the portrait again, as though a mist formed over the canvas.

"Oh, you two would be in entire harmony. You are absolutely alike. . . . And never more so than after this morning's scandal."

"What do you mean?" cried Jack, starting up.

His father ignored both the question and the note of anger in it.

"She was, as I said, too easily pleased, and by paltry nothings. It's true she would smile at me and hang on my neck like a child when I came back from the courts. But she'd blush with pleasure and gratitude for every trifle, at anybody's hands. It made no difference: Black Bess, or the colored groom who brought her round; the young planter who got off his horse to pick up her whip; the arbutus some meddling idiot clambered up a bank by the roadside to get for her. Everything was alike delightful to her: my ring on her finger, and the reds and golds of the sunset. . . .

"I recollect a doddering old fraud—a poet, I've heard

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—a friend of Sargent's, they told me. He came in to look over Sargent's shoulder at the work one morning I happened to be at the sitting. And he—he looked more at her than at the picture. 'Colors of our poor mixing,' he said, or some such drivel, 'can never aspire to entrap the tinge of rose that seems to float in Mrs. Holliday's cheek, or the softness of the shadow which faints away where chin joins throat.' Or, 'It would be expecting too much ever to dream of recreating the expression of these dark eyes, changing with her dream.' He whispered this to Sargent. She sat there absolutely still; but the pink crept into her face and stained her whole neck, and went away, and came again. I remember perfectly. She was wearing a ball gown from Paris. And then, in her confusion, she laughed like a child at the old meddler.

"'You shouldn't say pretty things unless you intend them to be heard,' she said. . . . Oh, *I* know. It was not *I* that conjured all that lovely sparkle into her eyes, or kept the color so high in her cheek. This was kindness, too, she believed. This was *noblesse oblige*, politeness, what you will. She thought every one *too* kind. Her gratitude went to every one, as if the world were but a place to be happy in, and to make others happy; as if, indeed, she thought no more of my toiling for millions for her than of the messenger who brought her my flowers.

"It irritated me—this smiling at all the world, even if she smiled at me, too. I told her so; but next morning she was a lark again. Then I said—never mind what. She hardly ever smiled after that; it was a lesson. . . ."

The voice, almost impersonal up to the end, now took on a greater scorn than he knew.

"And the doctor said it was a broken heart!"

"*Damn* you! You *killed* her!" cried the boy, with a half sob, leaping passionately away from the table as if it had been white-hot, his hands clenched, but his eyes blinded by tears.

VI

WHERE?

Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.

—Tennyson

MR. HOLLIDAY looked coolly past the face with its message of grief and bitter menace.

"What have you there, Thomas?" he inquired.

The gray-headed colored butler came forward quietly with a yellow envelope on a salver.

"A telegram, suh."

The financier slit the flap with his fingers and glanced at the contents. Then he looked up indifferently into the hard, feverish eyes of his son.

"I'll be pleased to discuss that point with you later," he said, in his composed way. "At present my attention is required elsewhere."

The boy did not stir from his posture of arrested passion; only his eyes followed his father as the latter took up his hat from the table and drew on his gloves. The older man turned for an instant at the door.

"You will kindly await my return," he said, abruptly. "And, also, you will remember to mend your manners to me in the future."

Jack was alone. Alone before a fire again, with the sun pouring a warm gilt into the dark seclusion of the study; upon the rich rugs, which held an atmosphere of quiet tread and modulated voices; upon the cases of elegantly bound books, an *ensemble* breathing the quint-

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essence of dignified leisure. The sunlight also toned to warmth upon the walls, canvases which whisper the glories of old-world galleries—of Corot, Velasquez, Rembrandt, Correggio. Even the carved oak of the ceiling and the massive furniture smiled in the Midas tint; but Jack Holliday, in the great armchair, did not smile; he gazed into nothing, and his face was like a rock.

Old Nassau! God bless her! She was the only mother young Holliday had known; and the tears stole into the boy's eyes.

Oh, they were many, these images of past beatitude. Trifling incidents drifted mysteriously into his recollection: the arm of a comrade about his shoulder as they strolled down Prospect; the sleepy head of another resting against the hollow of his arm in Chapel—why, he could *feel* the place!—the twilight warm from the stained windows; the rumble of the organ; the youthful David and Jonathan in the windows of the left transept, with the legend, *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth*. . . .

But now every fiber in the boy's nature was torn. In a sensitive temperament like young Holliday's—concealed, perhaps, by the iron simulacrum to his father—dwells a groping necessity for love and reverence; so much is its happiness a consequence of the good he can believe and feel about others.

The friend whom he had admired all his life with the sedulously hidden worship of boyhood, a sort of king who could do no wrong: this idol had fallen forward on its face, slimed with the ugly mildew of dishonesty, cowardice, and selfishness.

The sweetheart whom he had adored from childhood, and was learning to love with a man's love—she, too—ah, no! he could not think evil of her! She had never loved him, that was all; her brother was everything to her. And yet was it not a terrible thing to be heartless? Yes, she, too, had slipped from her niche: she was cruel,

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incapable of feeling, justice, or mercy. She, too, was selfish at bottom—like all the rest.

The father, of whom he had been wont to stand in awe as a Power which disdained common emotions and weaknesses, yet which was honorable and loving somewhere underneath it all: he, too, was doubly heartless, a money grubber whose whole world was founded on Self. His honesty was a mere habit, thought the boy; his pride of family a gilded mockery. Ah, it was horrible, this black void between himself and his own blood! There was the laughter of fiends and Things of Eternal Night in it. *What was the use?* The world was all one uneasy, ill-designed farce, a Darwin's world, where survival was to the fittest. And the fittest were—heartless.

There came a touch at his arm. He looked up vacantly at the bent figure in stiff black, at the kindly, crinkled, black face with the fringe of whitening wool. Thomas had served his mother, and her mother before her.

"What is it, Uncle Tom?"

Then he saw that the old man was holding a tray from which floated an aroma of hot, black coffee; and that an edge of lettuce peeped out from the cleavage of some most attractive sandwiches upon a folded napkin. The boy became suddenly aware of a breakfastless vacancy; and with it came not only the brusk young appetite, but a wave of emotion. Here was some one who thought of others, even if his skin were black, his eyes dim, and his old hands shaking as he held the tray.

"Uncle Tom, you're a brick!" cried Jack, gratefully, springing up to take the tray from the old darky, and setting it on the table near him. He gripped one of the gnarled hands warmly in his own. "And you've done a whole lot more for me than you know."

The old butler backed away with a deprecating, almost frightened look on his withered face.

"No, Mist' Jack, I only thought you looked a sort of peek-ed, and I thinks a' reckon Mist' Jack ain't had

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break'st this mo'nin'. . . . And my young Missy always liked sangwiches and coffee of a mo'nin' afteh a ball."

Jack, with a strange half smile in his eyes, watched the old man teeter absently out of the library. The coffee was hot, but he did not notice that as he drained one black cup at a draught. Then he mechanically picked up a sandwich and bit into it, half sitting on the table, with one leg dangling.

My young Missy. . . . My young Missy. His eyes wandered slowly back to the painting above the mantelpiece, still bathed, as it was, in the flood of white electricity. The sandwich balanced in his hand forgotten, as he was drawn by some mysterious force to a stand immediately under the picture. The joyous reverie of the girlish face flashed out living to him. He had never understood the expression of that portrait before. Why did it seem now to be a part of his own being? What was this strangling lump that rose in his throat? He rested his arm on the mantel and gazed up with dim fixedness.

His father entered the room and stood almost beside him; but the figure did not hear or move. The lip of Holliday, Sr., curled at the rapt yearning on his son's colorless face. The light from the canvas reflected down upon the raised features, and he saw that the lips were moving. A dry sob shook the young fellow's broad back.

"Oh, mother, mother!" cried the boy, brokenly.

The same nameless, momentary dimness entered the father's eyes; his hand half raised, as though to settle on his son's shoulder—half raised, and sank back.

Mr. Holliday warmed his hands at the fire, and then unconcernedly switched off the light at the foot of the painting. Jack started back, a dark flush in his cheek.

"That's enough sentiment for the time being," said Holliday, Sr., his back to the fire. "And now to business. What do you intend to do with yourself? I suppose you look forward to the life of a 'gilded youth'?"

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Jack said nothing, but his eyes smoldered. Mr. Holliday took two or three paces across the hearth rug and turned.

"What is your idea?"

"I have none."

Mr. Holliday paced the rug, his hands behind him, dissembling his discomfiture at this apathy.

"I'm very much afraid," he began, slowly, "that we have never understood each other."

He paused for a glance at his son's face.

"In the first place, there is that unreasoning prejudice of yours against the city. It is not an ogre garden, as you have so imaginatively represented it to me on various occasions. It is the great modern battle-ground. The big Fight, the vortex of the nation's life, the world's wealth, is here. To the victors belong the spoils, and they are the richest of this earth."

Jack stirred in his seat. His father had succeeded in rousing him to a less abstracted mood.

"How about the vanquished?" he muttered. "Where are *their* spoils?"

"I beg pardon?"

"This!" cried Jack, starting up with a defiant look on his pale face. "This!—that a man cannot call his soul his own in New York."

"Why, pray?"

"If he is poor—why, he's tied by an invisible string to a box he calls home. He returns there only at night, after days that are spasms of feverish, aimless struggle against poverty. If—"

"If he is rich? Go on."

Jack paused; his eyes turned to the windows.

"One never sees the stars here. That is *business* in New York; a man made into a machine, turning over decimal points, not thoughts, all day long, and not even a breath from the mountains or the sea when his work is over."

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"That is where you are wrong, John. The country is the place to rest after the fight is over; it is for the old, the worn out, the failure. Great New York stands with her mighty granite fingers pointing to heaven, beckoning to the young, the strong, the hopeful, to plunge into the struggle which is the one thing worth while to red blood and courage. She does not call to the weakling. For it is a struggle."

"And for what?"

An interval while the financier gazed with puzzled eyes at the detached scorn of his son's.

"Why, for wealth, which means power; a finger on the pulse of the world, and a control of the world's volition and nervous system. It took me forty years to gain that grasp, and it will take a strong hand to keep it. You—"

"And what do I want with power? What would I do with it?"

"What!"

"I'm not so wise and good that I could do anything but harm in the exercise of it. Nobody would thank me for that."

"Nobody need thank you," replied Mr. Holliday, coldly, with a squaring of powerful jaws. "What do you owe any one? Your fight is for *John Holliday and his descendants*. Your responsibility ends there."

"Does it? I was sure it went much farther than that."

"You are stifled with the arrant socialism which runs riot in the universities."

"Socialism?"

"Yes; I've noted it before. And Princeton is the worst."

"Your pardon.' Not the political brand. Merely the instinctive obligation—a moral impulse of recompense for value received."

"Recompense?"

"Yes."

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"To whom, pray? Did I not build my own fortunes? Do you see another man in the world who lives more laborious days than I?"

"No. That is perfectly true."

"Surely you must be a surface student of history if you have failed to note that posterity takes no account of means. It looks only to results."

Jack watched his father as the latter continued his pacing of the floor.

"That is history," the young man said, slowly, "as it is, not as it ought to be. I think people are just waking up to the fact that history can be bettered."

Mr. Holliday stopped, and their eyes met. Jack resumed, in an obstinate impulse, to express himself.

"You once gave me a very good exposition of *your* means in the financial struggle. *Gamblers* sometimes toil quite as hard, and gambling is much the same."

They continued to meet each other's gaze. The boy's obstinacy angered his father and hardened the line of his lips. All the former sardonic suavity and polished cruelty reigned in the rugged face.

"Ah," said he, with a polite vitriol of scorn, "if you and your *friends*, the Dear People, do not approve of your father's methods, why do they stand for them? Why are they so meek and obsequious whenever I waste a glance or a thought on them? Is it that they are ignorant that I exist, or that business is being carried on?"

Jack rose and looked into the fire.

"You think it is ignorance?" he asked his father.

"Yes. . . . Abysmal, brutal, beneath pity."

Jack turned, facing him.

"You are my father—and you would have me believe something you know is not true? You know it is something entirely different which causes mankind to tolerate us and our sort for one moment."

The atmosphere of temperamental hostility deepened between them. Eyes of father and son shot the same cold

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sparks at each other. The financier's jaw clenched, but he said nothing.

"Your pardon. You are my father. But I will tell you what we both know. Every single atom in present-day society, no matter how sunk in poverty, harbors a misty, childlike idea that life is a game with counters. Each atom dreams: 'Some day *I*—and perhaps this man toiling with blackened face beside me—I may be able to play this game, rig a neat little layout for highway and byway robbery—like John Holliday—and roll in wealth. I haven't a chance if I just try to build a fortune patiently, solidly, and honestly, so I'll trust to luck that some day I'll be a John Holliday, too.'

. . . No, sir, it is not ignorance of the masses that is our safety; it is this willingness to *play the game*—to trust to luck that sometime *they* may have the hyperbolic chance to steal, too. It is this slinking, wistful, contemptible hope. Otherwise we should last—so long."

Jack snapped his fingers. But as his earnest face reverted to the fire again, one might have seen weariness and apathy fill it gradually, like a cloud. . . . A game, with counters: he a pawn, an atom made to order which suffered the agony of possessing a heart!

Mr. Holliday wheeled abruptly in the midst of his pacing.

"You are a stubborn, misguided boy," he said, still with the same cool dignity. "I have never understood your standpoint, and I never shall. It is unbalanced and insane."

Jack was still absorbed in the fire. His father shot a sharp question at him.

"Why are you telling me these things?" It was as though a drop of ice water had percolated through stone and fallen upon white-hot iron.

The boy did not reply.

"They are out of place from you. I have no more time to waste upon such trifling. I have tried to meet your mind and become acquainted with it. Your ugly escapade of last night has not made you more tractable,

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and I shall not seek an occasion again. . . . *You*, I presume, will be for having *your* portrait painted by all the *lady* artists of the Quartier Latin. . . . Now your *mother*—”

The son, with blazing pallid face and eyes blue-black, dragged himself back, his hands knotted, his whole frame shaken with rage.

“Another word about my mother, you—you—” He choked, then stood erect and laughed bitterly.

Mr. Holliday sank into a chair, his shoulder numbed from the fierce gripe of that one hand. The eyes looked up at his son without malice and without fear. But there was an added appreciation, almost a respect, in them.

“And now,” said Jack, in a hard, deliberate voice, “we’re quits. What can it matter to you what I do with myself? I’m nothing to you. Even my poor mother”—a note of passion quivered through his voice—“was nothing. You gave me a college education, did you? What less could you do for my mother’s son? We’re quits, I tell you. I wouldn’t touch a penny of *your* money with the tongs yonder.”

He paused to look with a softened expression at his mother’s picture, and then again with almost savage menace at the half-dazed man in the chair.

“I know how much to blame *she* was. . . . God! Can’t I read it in her sweet face—and in my own heart?”

The boy took a last look at the picture, and with head erect strode out of the library, nearly colliding with Mr. Tingley, who was entering with some papers in his hands. The secretary stared with consternation at his employer.

“What has happened?” he stammered. “He’s gone! Sha’n’t I call him back?”

Mr. Holliday raised a calm hand to stop him.

“Nothing has happened,” he said, thoughtfully pressing a hand to his shoulder. “He’ll be back—nothing more certain. . . . And I like the boy better than ever I did before. He’s a man, at least.”

And he held out his hand for the papers.

VII

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—an Egyptian pitcher of tamed vipers, each struggling to get its *head above* the others: such work goes on under that smoke-counterpane.—*Carlyle*.

HIS father's limousine was drawn up before the door. Jack hardly noticed it there as he blindly descended the marble steps; but the chauffeur, wearing the semblance of a huge, furry bear at the wheel, saluted him with a smile.

"Mornin', Jack."

"Oh, hello, Jim!" returned the boy, with the irradiation of feature that endeared him to every one. The crystal flower vase swinging between the front windows caught Jack's eye. It was empty. He thought bitterly of the difference in phase between his nature and his father's. That vase never lacked for fragrance when Jack was in town; nor would it have done so if his mother were alive. But John Holliday, Sr., cared nothing for flowers, or for anything with the one quality of beauty merged in fresh simplicity. Jack spoke impulsively to the chauffeur; for they were on excellent terms. The man stared at the figure of the bill Jack handed him.

"Jim, I don't think I'll be back very soon; but I've a notion I'd like to have a rose—no, some violets—put in the vase there. Only for a week or so. Get me?"—shamefacedly. "But the bill's for you. Good-by, Jim."

They shook hands silently; the chauffeur with a hint of anxiety on his face.

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A dim recognition that he had somehow emerged upon arterial Broadway was in Jack's brain, and that the noon-hour rush was beginning there. For no special reason he turned slowly down a side street; but stopped almost immediately to gaze up at the tremendous steel skeleton of a new hotel going up across the way. The pavement opposite was sheltered by a heavy timber pent-house, through which poured an indifferent stream of people. Above a rising tier of masonry the structure soared aloft, from massive gray-steel pillars near the bottom to an airy cobweb against the blue at the top. Workmen, like black dots, moved busily here and there upon the dizzy girders of the heights; and a muffled, splitting vibration of pneumatic riveters echoed down the steel, which they were smiting unceasingly many hundreds of blows a minute. Several cranes swung ponderously upon the heights, having some mysterious connection with the coughing clatter of the donkey engines in various parts of the structure.

Jack followed with his eyes a squat, sturdy figure spreading his feet upon a large girder careering aloft at the end of a cable. The girder tilted somewhat, and the man unconcernedly shifted his weight in order to right it, releasing his hold on the chain as a mere matter of course. He looked down casually at the sinking bedlam of the street, arms akimbo, and, at a height of two hundred feet, spat carelessly downward.

Was it not a fine thing, thought Holliday, to build, to create thus visible benefactions to the race? Then again the sickening reaction came to his half-awakened enthusiasm. After all, *what was the use?* That great honeycomb would only serve to shelter a few more militant animals of the lasting Darwinian breed, some more soulless insects. *What was the use of it all, anyway?* A horror came over him. As he stood there on the curb a whistle blew loud and raucous for the noon hour, and he saw a few of the workmen swaying smoothly down-

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ward on the cables, their feet locked in loops of the chains; then the clatter of the donkey engines ceased. It was lunch hour for the builders. He would talk to some of these men, that was it; anything to deaden that nausea of a world void. Ignoring various insistent signs stenciled upon the close boarding of the barriers, he passed into the shadow of the titanic skeleton. Several workmen were lounging before a small shanty, a flimsy structure studded with round tin washers that glistened against the crisp tar-paper walls like silver bosses on a shield. Over the door in sprawling letters stared another portentous legend, POSITIVLY NO ADMITANCE. Beneath it the clear-cut stencil read, TOOLS.

These fellows were a rough, brawny lot in their gaping woolen shirts and stained brown overalls. Some wore battered derbies, some black caps with the brim turned back on the neck; one man even had a round seaman's cap with the gilt title of some battleship on the band. As Jack came up they were eating and wrangling about National League baseball.

"Looky here," vociferated a big, red-haired Irishman with a tarry smudge across his nose, "McCann ain't landed a single wallop out of the infield all last season—ain't made a single hit. Errors, every triffin' one of 'em! Errors! Dammit, don't *I* know?"

And he crunched viciously on a chicken bone.

"Don't believe in signs, eh, Commodore?" spoke up someone, brusquely, in a jocular grimness of tone. Receiving no immediate answer from the interloper, the voice continued in a quieter way, "Down on your luck, hey, bunky?"

The speaker was scrutinizing sharply young Holliday's somber expression and shadowed, sleepless eyes. He ignored in his estimate the costly fur-lined overcoat, and looked only at the newcomer's face. It was the same short, squatty figure Jack had seen soaring up on the girder. The small, gray eyes in the weather-beaten face were

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shrewd and twinkled kindly, and the bristly hair was whitening at the temples. Upon the forearm dangling over one knee was the bluish device of an eagle, with the motto, *U.S.S. Marblehead*.

"Luck? Well, you might call it that," acquiesced Holliday, with feeble humor.

The man made room beside him on the door sill, and nodded Jack to a seat with his mouth full; then he shoved into his lap a dinner pail with the lid off.

"Plenty for two," he remarked, between attacks on a large wedge of pie, "trust the old woman for that. Speaking from experience, I gen'ally have to pass on t'other half to some of the dagos on the sub-cellar job. And they ain't judges of good cookin'. It's real encouraging to go halves with a white man, knowing good pie when his teeth crackles on it."

Without more ado the hungry man in the two-hundred dollar overcoat pitched in, stowing away quantities of the "old woman's" hamburg steak and cinnamon buns, chatting with his host meanwhile. On the step below Christy Matthewson's record as a pitcher hung in the balance of vigorous discussion; but Jack and his host were thawing the ice in quieter tones.

"You hit it off well, my friend," Jack remarked, during the process, "when you asked me if I was down on my luck. I am, and the very worst way. But it isn't for lack of money." He laughed mirthlessly as he displayed the crisp layer of bills in a wallet. "No, it isn't that. It's worse, any amount worse. You might even say I was *down and out*."

"I see," nodded the other, shrewdly. "The drink. And I've heard say the champagne don't make 'em drunk, just plain bughouse."

Holliday smiled in his face.

"Do I look like—"

"No, you don't *look* like a souse. . . . I got it, though. . . . All women is fools," and, with an afterthought, "but

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my Netty. Buck up, kiddo; there's lots where she come from."

Jack abruptly abandoned the topic.

"No, I'm not a 'souse,' and I'm not broke; but I surely want to bicker with somebody who's not all—for somebody. Now, you've a wife, and you have a *human* look to you."

"Cheer up, m' boy!" cried the little man, slapping Jack heartily on the knee, apparently anxious to avoid any further doubtful compliments, and conscious that the younger man was merely thinking aloud, and that in a distraught manner enough.

"Tell me. What do you do it for?" Jack continued as if there had been no interruption, pointing aloft at the dwindling network of steel.

The iron-worker stared, at a loss. Holliday resumed on a different tack.

"Don't you ever get dizzy up there?"

"No; can't say I do," rejoined the other, tilting back his greasy derby and producing from somewhere a blackened corncob. Jack hastened to offer him a cigarette.

"Thanky kindly," deprecated the other; "them cigarettes spoils a man's taste for *good* tobacco."

And he placidly filled the pipe from a paper pouch boasting the inspiring trademark "Pick & Shovel."

"Speaking of getting dizzy," he remarked, emitting a complacent funnel of smoke, "puts me in mind of Terry M'Gee on the sky girder in the forties of the Singer Building.

"'Terry,' says I to him, 'what 'd you do if somebody was to yell up you'd come into a million, beheft your deceased sister's husband's grandmother?'

"'What 'd I do?' says he, leaning on his sledge and spitting on his hands. We was on a foot-and-a-half girder, and you could see straight down through the ribs to hell. 'What 'd I do? Why, dammit, I'd throw myself down on my face this second and yell bloody murder

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for an express elevator to come take me down out of this!"

Jack laughed with real enjoyment, for the first time in many hours; then his first purpose returned.

"But don't you ever worry about what would happen to your wife and—"

"Kids? Yep, got three of 'em; cutest little codgers you ever saw."

"If you should—"

"Leap the gap? Why, I ain't thought about that for a long time, and I can't afford to do it at all now. Oncet, right after I got spliced with Netty and quit the navy, I had to batten down the hatches some way, so I signed papers for this kind of a berth. Being on lookout sort of put it in mind to me. And I ain't saying that sometimes my wind didn't catch in my neck out at the end of a girder in a nor'wester, when you could see the liners slipping down the North River with their smudge ahead of 'em. No, I ain't saying I wasn't scared. But a man's got to live"—spitting gravely into a litter of shavings at the corner of the shanty—"so I thinks of Netty and says, 'Belay there, man, a stiff reef in the upper lip.'

"No," he said, shortly, "I wouldn't 'a' stuck if it wasn't for Netty."

Abruptly he blew out a cloud of rank smoke and clamped his hand on Jack's knee.

"I see what you meant," he said, a light of comprehension in his seamed face. "I stuck through worse'n this job for— Why, oncet, before we had nine-hour shifts, too, I was runnin' a riveter. The everlastin' bunbustin' th-th-rr-p of the thing got into the back of my head somehow, and the devil was making a boiler there when I ought 'a' been sleeping. Four months I run the thing, and then goes to the Bellevue Hospital. I can't run a riveter now, the which being just as good."

"You're foreman now?"

"Only of the steel-construction gang," the little man

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said, deprecating, with an odd mixture of dignity and contempt. "I ain't got nothing to do with the dagos and bums on the sub-cellar job"—pointing with his pipe-stem to the cavernous maw of gray rock over to the left.

Jack could see several squat, ugly tripods forty feet down in the ragged cavity: steam-drills from which rose wisps of white vapor, deserted for the nonce.

"Yes, I see what you want." He signed casually to one of the men, who strolled over toward the nearest donkey engine. "*What do I do it for?* . . . Why, for Netty, God bless her, and the kiddies. I'm all they've got. And the others can go—not that I mean any harm to anybody. But the rest just naturally don't count while I got to take care of *them*. In the navy I used to be a drinking man, but now I'm trying to be the right sort for those three babies of mine."

The speaker stood up briskly and stretched his arms, dissembling the feeling in his words by a yawn. A whistle whooped piercingly from the nearest donkey engine. Jack thanked the foreman for his lunch, tactfully forbearing to mention payment.

"Holy Farragut!" exclaimed the latter, his small eyes dancing. "Ain't I rather a white man gets it than a dirty dago—and on a sub-cellar job, too? . . . On the jump, boys!"

"Good-by," said Jack.

"So long, bunky."

"But look here. The next time you take your hand off a chain two hundred feet in the air, think of the kiddies and take hold again."

The little foreman clapped him on the back and was gone.

Outside the entrance a big man with a six-day's black growth of beard accosted Jack abruptly.

"Look me in the eye," he said earnestly, to Holliday. "Do I look like a panhandler?"

Jack noted that the fellow's eyes were red and feverish

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and his face hollow, but that his clothes, though old and travel-stained, were remarkably neat.

"For God's sake," continued the man, "give me a job in there! Anything! I'm starving, I tell you!"

"Here, move along!" roughly interposed a burly officer. "Move along out of this!"

The man squared his shoulders in the threadbare coat, turned stiffly, and walked away without a word, head up, his back like a ramrod. He was out of sight in a twinkling.

"They've got *that* heeler well trained," a passerby laughed shortly, pausing an instant to light a cigar by the barrier.

Jack turned away indifferently, grazing past a ponderous woman in a sealskin sacque, who was haling along by one hand a small valise with a wire grating in the end. A large tortoise-red cat gazed out thereat with a discontented expression. Jack almost smiled to see the likeness in the faces of mistress and chattel. Both wore a bored, harassed, over-fed look. But even the humorous element of life had lost its savor.

"Maybe that bum *wasn't* a panhandler," he thought, somewhat regretfully. "He hadn't the look of a beggar, even if—"

He emerged from the pent-house and passed on.

Jack, still in his agony of soul-sickness, not knowing what his plans were to be, nor caring, stopped in front of a cigar store on Broadway and Forty-second Street. The Great White Way was in the full glow of its electric glamour and excitement. Flowing crowds filled the pavements from edge to edge with the ante-theater movement, and the throbbing roar of the streets blurred upon the animated voices of those passing. Here and there a roguish, curving cheek under a close toque would call up visions of Violet momentarily, and his lips would wince at the reminder. All the same, thought he, all the same

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sleek, pretty, selfish little animals. He tried to tell himself he didn't care, but something ached and bled when he thought of one in particular.

He looked away from the crowds, looked away down Broadway at the white fan of light against the black sky. Rapid flashes of changing incandescent signs up aloft caught his eye: a figure with an umbrella in a lurid electrical rain, whose skirt (beaded on the hem by the flickering bulbs) fluttered in an imaginary breeze. Then again it was a cat frolicking with some marvelous silk "too strong to break." The cat's incandescent paws moved, the incandescent spool revolved. Jack winced. Violet had once turned him adrift in the wilds of Wana-maker's with "just that shade" instructions. It was not funny now. . . . Again it was a marvelous, sparkling jet against the sky (somebody's peerless mineral water). Jack turned away, his face gray. He had never ordered it for anyone but Violet.

A short distance down the side street arose a monotonous, thumping clamor, and Jack was aware that several men and women in a caricature of military uniforms were thrusting a wedge of strident voices into the general uproar of the great thoroughfare. The discordant chant of the hymn they were murdering and the blating of the drum annoyed him.

The Salvation Army! No doubt these people did good in their way; but a certain cheapening of the religion they proclaimed revolted him. Jack had been exposed to Christianity at college, but it had not "taken." Ask him, and he would say "Yes, I am a Christian," as a matter of course. But, as a matter of fact, the only religious belief which really existed in his mind at this time was a defiant feeling that Nature was a tremendous, unfeeling force, working blindly and without semblance of justice. Never had he grasped the significance of the Christ-man's stay upon this earth. He merely felt himself to be a wretched human particle, utterly alone in the stern but

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pitiful revolt against the unfeeling Order of things, an Order which he identified with the Spirit of Evil.

He gazed with narrowed, wistful eyes at the men and women with their hymn books.

"If their Master," the boy thought, bitterly, "would only come back and take a look at the world he has 'saved'!"

The lost ideal wrought upon his mind—and passed. The haunting quality of his lips and eyes caused people near him to glance at him a second time, curiously; he smiled, careless of them, and moved on.

"Never will because never was," bourdoned through the street roar in his ears, with a strange undertone of abandon, subtle, indescribable, inexplicable. . . . A woman's eyes, dark, liquid, caught his gaze in the crowd close by, in the half-oblique, half-bold, half-retreating allure of her kind. A beautiful, rich-toned, wilful face; the vivid answer to a reckless thought; the seductive, low-lashed avowance of a choice—for a choice. She was clad in leopard skins, and diamonds flashed out at her throat; and yet she— The soul-sickness tinged Jack's look; perhaps it was the pity in it from which the girl's eyes caught a spark of surprise and scorn. She tilted her small head mockingly and swept by, brushing his elbow, lingering, reluctant. At the Knickerbocker corner she looked back—with the same disdain—and regret.

VIII

THE CITY: NIGHT

Every one is the son of his own works.

—*Don Quixote.*

SOME of the theaters were already emptying, and the crush was heavy in the neighborhood, especially in front of the particular playhouse Jack happened to be passing. All at once a brusk outburst of passion effervesced in a section of the crowd.

"Drop that, you thief!" exploded a heavy voice. "Here, officer, arrest this man!"

Universal commotion arose as everybody shoved up close to gain a view of the altercation. A plethoric individual in a silk hat, his overcoat gaping upon his evening clothes, wrenched something from a shabby being who hardly seemed to resist the action. Almost immediately the big policeman grabbed the man's collar.

"Lock me up, that's right," mumbled the prisoner; "but take your hands off me—I'll come along peaceable." And he held out his wrists for the manacles. Jack started; it was the "well-trained panhandler" of the noon hour.

"You will, will you?" growled the bluecoat. "I guess you *will*, my friend." And he twisted the cloth into a vise-like grip.

"I'd come, I said," was the sullen retort. "But take your hands off, that's all. I'm not used to that."

The man reached up, quietly enough, to detach the other's fingers; his captor responded by a crack on the head with his nightstick. A remnant of angry pride

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surged into the other's emaciated face, and he made a desperate momentary effort to wrench away the club, and as suddenly desisted. Nevertheless, the officer, his face purple with rage, rained blows upon the defenseless head, for the tramp's hat had fallen off. The impact of the weapon sounded dull, sickening; a thread of blood appeared on the bowed forehead. However, the enraged bluecoat showed no sign of desisting, although his victim was about to collapse to the pavement, his head a gory pulp.

"You—damned—coward!"

Someone snatched the nightstick from his hand and whirled him violently around. Instinctively he seized upon his assailant.

"Hands off, you dirty Tammany heeler!" blazed Jack, in a white fury, "or I'll—stuff this down your brute throat!"

The young man sprang back out of the other's reach, and the two glowered at each other like savage animals about to gouge and tear. Holliday's rage seemed to crystallize into a cold contempt; but that of the officer bloated to a furious access of heat. The blood-smeared wretch looked on with indifferent, glazing eyes, the three the focus of a narrow circle of tight-packed human flesh.

"What call 've you to interfere?" roared the bluecoat. "I'll lock you up, too, you—"

He paused, something terrible in the composure and immobility of the other, something at the same time pitiless and fearless in the feverish eyes, compelling him. The Holliday lineage ruled there utterly; and the Holliday passions and feelings never left the leash.

"Since you consider it advisable," began the young man, icily, "I shall be delighted to accompany you to the station-house and give a report of your singularly humane and kindly treatment of prisoners to the inspector. Here is my card."

The blood sank out of the bluecoat's heavy face as he

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read the name so potent in high financial and, consequently, political circles. Visions of dishonorable discharge flitted through his mind; he noted with what was almost awe the well-known, salient Holliday features; and humbly he drew close to the young man, whispering an entreaty in his ear.

"You should have thought of them before," muttered Jack, a certain relenting softening mouth and eyes. "Put yourself in the place of some of these poor devils sometimes. Think—'that might be I, or my son.' See what I mean? . . . Call it quits. This man is straight, merely starving. I'll see to him."

The crowd sifted together and moved away disgustedly; they had hoped for a fight, not a moral exhibition. It is ever so.

Yes, Jack would see to the tramp. And he did. It was his way of snapping his fingers in the face of his nightmare, Nature, of vindicating his own kindly spirit against the whole Darwinian universe. The twain repaired to an apothecary's, where the man had his head bound up; then they dined heartily together in a Sixth Avenue chop-house.

Ah, descendant of Don Quixote, sometimes I think your mad old ancestor was the most lovable vagabond of them all! And here you are following the most illustrious, unlucky career of De la Mancha to the uttermost extremes of folly. Any stately Fifth Avenue philosopher, familiar with the seedy derelicts on the benches of Madison Square or in the many other haunts of men dead to the world and ambition, will inform you that you are casting your gold at the feathered songsters of the bosky dell.

The freezing air smote upon his face at the entrance of the restaurant; the lights danced about him, and he felt unaccountably faint and ill. He stumbled into the shadow. . . . Through a haze he saw the tramp come out and peer unavailingly along the pavement—for him. Jack's head drooped with a qualm of weariness; but when his

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senses steadied he thought to see two figures there instead of one.

The newcomer had a builder's square and a tool box under his arm; a belated stage carpenter, no doubt, in his working-clothes and a rough woolen cap.

Jack, through the haze he could not shake off, saw the smile of a child gleam and spread from the eyes under the dingy cap and transform the finest, most virile face he had ever seen into a mist of understanding and sympathy.

"D-did you see—?" he seemed to hear the tramp stammer.

"Yes," replied the stranger, "I did. A young man who has been suffering. I know, for I have been with him."

Dimly he saw the stranger turn toward him, and felt his senses swimming out into the shadows where the two figures had melted away.

Someone was shaking him by the shoulder. Jack looked up into the tramp's unshaven, anxious face.

"I'm all right," he exclaimed, starting to his feet shamefacedly. "This won't do," he muttered to himself, passing a hand over his eyes.

"Hadn't you bet—?"

"No, no! You—you—who was it you were speaking to just now?"

The man gaped at him, puzzled.

"The carpenter—with the square?" insisted Jack, "and the—"

The fellow stammered something, a peculiar alarm flitting gradually into the puzzlement of his face. Jack laughed in wan comprehension at the last.

"Oh, don't mind me," he muttered. "I must be half woozy from lack of sleep."

"Hadn't I better—?"

"No. Good-by, and be good," Jack tried to smile, gripping the other's hand.

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The tramp stood rooted to the spot, staring at the retreating back. Presently, when it was out of sight, he shook himself, fingering the bill in his pocket with a vague blend of satisfaction and regret.

"As decent as they make 'em," he mused, as he trudged along. "I *ought* to gone with him, though. He was—Oh, well, Bill Bamman, he ain't and you didn't. That's what I'd call a hunch. It—it's not such a bad old world, after all."

It was half past twelve. A train thundered by overhead on the Elevated with a syncopated roar of hollow metal. The shabby restaurants and bars, even some of the tawdry shops, were still lit up; and the strange "other half" was still hurrying along the pavement somewhere, somewhere. Jack knew what he would do now: go to the Club and get some sleep; he was dead tired. He turned over toward Fifth Avenue, walking rapidly along the dim-lighted side street. The soul-sickness was gone. He was tired; that was all. His mind did not even revert to his strange lapse of a moment before. He was tired. Next morning he would get out of this—

What was that? Who had spoken to him, touched him on the arm?

"Hello, bonny."

Jack stared quickly at the two dark figures. A shaft of light from the colored and frosted windows of a small Italian restaurant fell athwart the sidewalk, and he caught a glimpse of one dark, rouged face, a fleshly mask whose painted lips were wreathing in an evil smile. The other woman's countenance was averted. Holliday cast off the hand from his arm with almost brutal loathing, and whirled about to go on, when the mere sound of a voice caused him to halt in his tracks.

"No—no! I can't! Don't make me!"

There was a something girlish, almost childlike, in the timbre of that voice, something agonized and desperate. It was as different from the coarse, masculine quality of

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the other's speech as could be imagined. The young man came back slowly. One of the figures was shaking the other slighter one by the elbow, pouring out a vile torrent of abuse in a harsh, unsexed voice. By the mottled light from the windows Jack saw a face like the petal of a daisy raised to her companion in mute pleading. That instant the latter saw Jack standing there; her scolding changed abruptly to a slimy, wheedling tone that was meant to be encouragement.

"Here he is again, kiddo; wake up and hear the birdies sing."

The girl stared wildly at the stranger, choked, and buried her face in her hands.

"You see?" whispered the other to Jack. "A bit scared; that's all."

The young man read nothing but utter wantonness and depravity in the older woman's twitched eyelid and the hard luster of the dilated, belladonna pupil, in the curl of the full lips.

"Get out!" he exclaimed, roughly. "I don't want *you*." With hesitating deliberation he touched the girl on the shoulder as she stood with her head shudderingly averted under her big black hat. And in all softness he added, "Come with me."

She shrank away with a stifled shriek.

"I won't hurt you," he resumed, in a soothing tone; but he realized that she was half dead with terror. "Wouldn't you rather be with me than this—this—? I won't hurt you, honestly. It's just as though you were my sister."

She raised her eyes timidly to Jack's earnest, haggard young face, and was almost ready to trust the kindness she saw there. Then the covert, cunning leer of her companion at the young man froze her with the notion that this was the most dangerous type, and that the two were leagued to deceive her. The hapless one recoiled; but he placed her arm firmly through his own and started to

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walk away, drawing her along with him. The older woman followed and made as if to speak. Jack stopped abruptly, in nauseated disgust.

"Get out! Don't let me see your face again!"

"Oh, all right, dearie," she retorted, in harsh mockery. "Here's your latchkey, my love."

And she swept away, not noticing the key drop from the girl's nerveless fingers, to lie forgotten on the pavement.

"You'll not need that," said Jack to the dazed girl at his side, as they walked away from Broadway. Immediately she roused with a sob and poured out a flood of wild entreaty. A lone passer-by eyed them coolly as they stopped for a moment beneath a light. Jack fixed the swimming, childlike eyes with the moved pity of his own.

"I'm not what you think I am, you poor little thing. My name is Holliday—John Holliday, and I only want to help, Miss—?"

"Barry"—with shamed, downcast eyes, a tear trickling across the flaming baby cheek. She was pretty in a round, fuzzy, kittenish way; and there was absolutely nothing in her face to suggest her compromising situation. There was a strangeness, however, about the black princess gown and picture hat which did not seem to harmonize with the childish features. She could not have been over seventeen years old.

They emerged upon the sparse midnight waste of Fifth Avenue, and Jack strolled along with the arm of this child-woman still through his, bending his head and asking a question now and then. Half stifled with her shame, as she was at first, he could scarcely elicit anything but stumbling, vague bits of information; then she would not answer at all. Presently she stopped, and raised a passionate, tear-stained face, pitiful to see in its white, hopeless despair.

"Oh, God! . . . Let me go. Where are you taking me?"

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. . . There's nothing left but the river. It's over there somewhere. To-morrow; yes, to-morrow! . . . No, I don't believe you. . . . This is all a big, black nightmare. Let me go!"

She burst into hysterical weeping, reeled, and would have fallen to the street if Jack had not caught her up on his arm. He tried to soothe her in his gentlest tones, but the impassioned sobs still shook her. An inspiration of the humor of it came to him.

"Stop it!" he commanded, shaking her gently at arm's length as he would a kitten; and he laughed aloud at his own dilemma. The girl was so frightened that one of her sobs stopped halfway in her throat, and she looked up in his face, utterly bewildered. Then, all unexpectedly, she threw her arms about his neck and wept like a lost child.

"That's better," Jack grinned cheerfully, and waited for her to stop of herself. Several pedestrians passed, and he grinned at them, too.

"Now," he began, decisively, "your aunt must have given you another address besides the 'Typewriter Wanted,' didn't she?"

"Yes," she said, miserably, exhausting the possibilities of a microscopic handkerchief; "but I never had a chance to go there."

"Where was it?" he insisted.

She gave him a number on the borderline of Harlem, near Morningside Park.

"We'll go there," he said, abruptly, and gave her his arm.

They were near the Subway at Thirty-third Street. They plunged into the gay but lack-luster theater and supper crowd, bound uptown, and Jack kept his timid companion diverted by his speculation about its component individual elements. He was his own cheery self, the Doctor of Applied Nonsense; no wonder her little heart warmed to him. They got off at One Hundred

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and Tenth Street. It was some distance to the apartment house she had mentioned, and they were very well acquainted by that time. At least, Jack was familiar with every member of her family, including the cat.

The apartment was a typical one, of the kind which has a showy marble atrium, and one night janitor to watch the telephone switchboard and run the elevator. The girl stopped in the vestibule, a look of trouble on her childish face.

"That's all right," he smiled. "You don't want your friends to know you came—accompanied. I'll just wait out here until you find from the janitor whether they're in."

She looked up at him, timidly grateful, and opened the inner door. He waited several moments. Then came the muffled crash of a chair upon a tiled floor. Jack gripped the knob and strode inside. The switchboard was in an alcove around the corner; and there he found her struggling aside, with her face to the wall, from a big, half-blood negro in tawdry livery, who held both her hands.

"Aw, come on now, kid," this individual was grumbling. "You ain't on your beat and—"

He recoiled with a flash of the whites of his eyes at the apparition of a figure so unmistakably well groomed. And he took another frightened look at the sternness of the newcomer's face. He grinned placatingly.

"It ain't only a squab off'm—only a Broadway chicken, sir. She—"

"Let her loose," said Jack, quietly.

"Yessir."

"Come out here."

"Yessir. What—?"

"I'm going to teach you how to address a lady."

Jack stepped up to the big mulatto and boxed both of his ears from right to left. The man reeled and put up his hands, an ugly look on his pasty face. Jack smiled into his eyes.

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"Do you get me?"

The mulatto made a wicked pass. Jack knocked him down and left him bleeding. Jack, Jack, I fear you will acquire habits!

He was about to stir his victim up again with his toe, and ask some necessary questions, when the girl came up to him, sobbing with fright.

"They aren't here!"

She clutched his arm as if afraid to let him out of her sight. He was not satisfied, but got the name from her and looked in the postal list on the switchboard desk. No sign.

"See?" mumbled the mulatto, still afraid to get up from the floor lest—"see, the ain't nobody here that name. She ain't nothing but a—"

"That will do for you," advised Jack, with the ominous chill in his eyes. He did not look at the man again, but held open the door for her.

"Come, Miss Barry, you can't stay here. There's a mistake in the address."

She came with him willingly, eager to get away from the place where she had been so frightened. Her hand stole into his arm again, and they discussed the situation thoroughly. She knew no one else in New York. It was no use. Suddenly she turned to him with a sob, her recent terror still in her eyes.

"Oh, *you* keep me! I'm not afraid with *you*."

And then with curious inconsistency turned away, flaming. They had emerged on Amsterdam Avenue; save for surface cars and scudding north-bound motors it was almost deserted. Jack looked up and down the dwindling line of lights to each side of him, ruminating. At last he spoke.

"You probably haven't heard of—the House of the Good Shepherd?" he said, softly.

She shook her head, indifferent, numb.

"I'll take you there, and then—then I'll get you a

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ticket home, to—where did you say it was? It sounded like a cross between a sob and a gurgle before. Oh, Snow Hill, Maryland? You see, Miss Barry, I'm from down that way myself. So you can go back to Aunty and be just as happy as you were before you answered that advertisement in little old New York. . . . I understand, you poor lost lamb. Here! Don't begin to cry again!"—in genuine alarm. He went rattling on in self-defense. "The point is, little Miss Muffet in Tophet, do you believe me now? Will you trust me?"

He looked doubtfully into her face and smiled, a concentrated essence of his own long day of suffering and present pity in that curve of the lips. She met the look breathlessly; nobody could long doubt the goodness of heart behind the strangely sweet smile that on rare occasions made the cragged face more than handsome—beautiful, with a something beyond cast and line. The girl nodded and hid her face beside his shoulder. A pang in reminiscence of last night's incident made him almost resentful of this clinging to protection; but the instinct of kindness kept him from showing anything except cheerfulness in his voice when he spoke.

"You're only a child, my dear," said this venerable monument of twenty-one, "and you'd better stick close to Snow Hill after this."

He beckoned a hovering taxicab.

"Ah!" she breathed, with a peculiar little intonation of loathing, as they settled themselves in the taxi.

"Ah—the nigger!" he laughed, in cheery completion. "Oh, you is from Maryland, chile! Ah neveh knowed it t' fail, Missy."

She could not help laughing brokenly at his quizzical expression.

Jack finished his statement in the office and returned to the quiet little parlor where he had left the girl. She

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was there, her face hidden against the Sister's breast, convulsive arms about the older woman.

"You'll take the best of care of Miss Barry, I know, Sister Anna."

"Yes," replied the woman simply, her whitening locks in their snowy coil bent down to the golden ones, her motherly face and gentle eyes instinct with pity. "There, *there*, my child! You're worn out. You'll wake up to-morrow after a long, sound sleep—and everything will be so much brighter again." She stroked the childish tresses.

The girl raised her head, piteously intent upon the young man's thoughtful face, her cheeks wet with tears. Her hands went out to him.

"Oh, you *are* good!" she sobbed. "You want to be kind. But you can't help me. *They* did it. *They* took my clothes, my money. *They* took—they took—*everything*—and left me—the river."

The cold, white stillness of her expression struck the full horror and cruelty home to him. She hurried on.

"*They* did it. *They!* But I can see people pointing their fingers at me—*me*—when I would rather have died first!"

He seized her hands with an exclamation of pity.

"Oh, *you* are not to blame, you poor little thing. I knew that as soon as I heard your voice."

"Then you don't think I'm a—a bad woman!"

"I meant it when I said—*my sister*. You are good—as the best. Better! You are the kind—*they* can never really harm."

He took the child face between his hands and kissed it on the brow gently, then gave her to the Sister.

"God bless you, Mr.—Mr. Holliday!" sobbed the girl.

"When you go home to-morrow," he said, in parting, "you'll take with you credentials signed by the president of one of the biggest banks in the world—where you have just been serving with special fidelity and merit for the past two weeks."

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"Oh! How could that—"

"It is part of a gentleman's duty to lie—for a lady. A lady, I said. Then we'll see a finger pointed at you. Indeed!"

He paused at the foot of the stone steps, looking back at the soft, dim lights of the House.

"'God bless you, Mr. Holliday,'" he mused. "'God! . . . The 'Good Shepherd' . . ."

His mouth curved bitterly.

"I don't know about that. But—damn the human devils! The poor little innocent! It's worth while—being about—just for the chance to *smash* some of them!"

And he stepped into the waiting taxi.

Jack entered his room at the Club and shut the door. Curiously enough, his sleep-famished brain dwelt on the veriest trifles after the long day of mental torment. Great Cæsar, but he was tired! Dead was no name for it. Wasn't that yawn a jaw-breaker? This was a deuce of a note, this camping out minus pajamas and a razor, without even a tooth brush.

Unknotting his necktie, he stood by the window and looked out from a lofty prospect over a portion of the city, a murmuring waste bleared red and white with unblinking lights, like openings into a white-hot hell, like fallen nebulae, like a myriad of greedy, feverish eyes. A revulsion swept from the depths of his being against this thunderous forest of stone and iron, this grumbling, insatiable ogre which devoured mankind, soul and body.

He thrust open the window and flung himself upon the bed in his underclothing, drew the quilt up to his chin, and buried his head in the pillow. In fifteen seconds he was asleep.

At noon of the next day, in the sun-bathed alcove of the library on Fifth Avenue, Mr. John Holliday, Sr., raised his iron-gray head and inscrutable, close-shaven face from the perusal of a litter of papers on the desk.

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"Well?" he said to his secretary, who had just entered. Mr. Tingley replied, in a hesitating tone:

"The men at Pinkerton's say they lost all track of him until this morning. An hour ago, at the Pennsylvania Station, he bought one straight ticket to Snow Hill, Maryland, wherever that is. And. . ."

"And what?"

"And—there was a young woman who appeared to be—accompanying him. She—the detective came back from the station directly—to report—as you ordered."

A spasm seemed to seize upon the auditor, a silent throe in the essence of the man, which left the iron features imperturbed, the square frame rigid; one hand, only, clenched an arm of the chair.

"He'll come back, sir," the secretary hastened to assure him. "He'll come back; you said so yourself yesterday morning."

"It was a hasty statement of mine. You have no idea what a stubborn young hound he can be." And to himself he muttered, "Mulish, more obstinate than—his mother."

It is invariably human nature to be more severe toward a fault in others when it is one's own gravest failing. Mr. Holliday deliberately took up his pen and fingered over the sheets of a Banking Commission Report.

"Very well"—with a cold finality. "After the course he has seen fit to pursue, there is small wonder that I leave him now to his own devices. He is none of mine."

1

SYMPHONY

IX

THE MOUNTAINS

High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
Of human cities torture.

—*Byron.*

ALONG the somber swell of the western range the crimson agony of sunset died away in a sudden sinking of tone; the eastern gold dimming to the western purple-black, inclosing an enchanted lagoon of violet mist.

The hoofbeats of a horseman made a soft crumple of sound along a grassy trail in the midst of the cool lowland shade. That trail was hardly an impression of wheel-tracks upon the lissom meadow surface; and the sound of the horse's feet on the turf was hollow and unreal; horse and rider a smoke-wraith in the obscure. Nearer came the faint rhythm, merging into a creaking of leather and a low whistle; then the whole medley of noises ceased. The horseman had stopped, and was gazing up at the gray cleft of Trevett Gulch, where an aftermath of evening opened a lighter wedge in the blue-black, as though to render articulate a far whisper of rushing waters, like to the breath of a great forest. On a sudden, out flickered the last rosy reflection from the east, and the gray incision in the hills melted away to black. A single light glimmered into being high up in the fading cleft, like a fiery jewel against velvet; and at the foot an uneven yellow cluster of lamplit windows—the home ranch of the Sleeping Seven. The distant bark of a dog came to the watching man's ears, sounding fine and thin and delicate. He set his tongue to his lips; and the staccato

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murmur of a canter dwindled away toward the lower beacons.

Seven men in their shirt sleeves tilted their chairs around the rough table in the center of the bunk-house. As many more were overlooking the poker game in progress, or were lounging about the rude double tier of bunks which lined the walls: rough caricature of a Pullman sleeping-car. One man was evoking a nimble rattle of ragtime from a decrepit banjo; the others were talking or wearing the semblance of sleep. The game progressed in frozen silence, except when somebody raised a bet or swore at the cards he threw down. In the yellow lamp-light the room showed thick with tobacco smoke.

A slither of hoofs came to a sudden stop outside the open door.

"What's that?" asked a swarthy giant of a man at one side of the table, starting up.

"Only Saturday with the mail from town," replied another of the players. The men looked at each other significantly as the big man removed a covert hand from the holster at his belt. He was the only man in the room who carried a weapon; they knew it never left him, even when he slept.

The smack of an open hand on a horse's flank came from without, followed by a snort and a scamper of retreating hoofs. A young man of twenty-five or six entered the room, whistling, and lugging a saddle with a hair bridle hanging from the horn, both of which he stowed away under a bunk in the corner.

Immediately a scraping of chairs and a clamor arose about the table; even the sleepers rolled out of their bunks and crowded around the newcomer, rubbing their eyes.

"Anything for me, Saturday? Anything for Bum McMillan—Scotty—Humpy Nisson? . . . Get off my foot, you cast-iron polyp! . . . Hey, let's see!"

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"Give me a chance, boys," cried the man beset. "This is no bargain counter."

He advanced to the table, fumbling with a packet and laughing into the eager faces; occasionally he shoved a letter into an outstretched hand. Through the blue smoke wreaths the distributor's countenance showed browned and rugged under the dusty Stetson, with a cleft squareness of jaw and a level set of eyebrow. The whites of the eyes were singularly clear in the tanned visage; and there was a strange *mélange* of age and youth in the eyes themselves, and in the shallow crinkles at the corners that had been graven there by the sun glare and the wind—wrinkles which deepened when he smiled. There was a tiny, three-cornered scar upon the left temple resembling a blunt arrow head; and, like all the men about him, he would have been none the worse for a razor full three days past. His teeth gleamed strong and white as he "joshed" happily into the expectant faces.

"Hey, Sammy, here's one for you. . . . And I hope to hang if here isn't one for you, Bum! Bet you wrote it to yourself."

Some one snatched the packet, and an exciting tussle occurred until the bearer rescued his charge and clambered upon the table with it. From this point of vantage he finished the distribution in safety.

"Take your time. You know, Sandy passed the word along that there's some big financial gun staying at the boss's house up Trevett; some Wall Street gazabo who holds stock in the Blennerhassett, and is out looking over the ground for a syndicate—Bighorn Consolidated, or something. So that's where *you* get off; we can't afford to lose any government bonds, you know. Here's one for Monsieur Pierre Tabary, postmarked Winnipeg. I guess she loves you still, Pete."

One of the epistles had fallen to the floor, and a boisterous individual pounced upon it, singing out:

"Tombstone, Arizona! Who the—wait—Mister Ste-

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phen Smith. Who the devil's Smith? We ain't got no Smiths here."

Everybody crowded around to look at the handwriting; but a brawny hand parted the crowd and coolly took the letter from under their noses.

"That's mine," said the man with the holster at his hip. The significant glance went again from man to man, then settled on the big man as he sat unconcernedly down and slit open the envelope. Two weeks before his name had been Rohan, though behind his back all called him Black Steve.

"I'll bet he's been mixed up with them Mex rebs along the Sonora line," whispered one, "and had to skip out."

The man in the chair paid no attention whatever; he was laboriously spelling out the contents of his letter, a scowl of concentration on his brow. Strangely enough, nobody ventured to "josh" *him* about his letter. They sat down again about the table, and Bum McMillan shuffled the cards. The others rolled cigarettes and watched Rohan covertly. We have said he was big; let us qualify: he was huge, a colossus, built on the almost deformed lines of the Farnese Hercules. The tremendous spread of shoulder sloped away from a neck like a buffalo's; the black sateen shirt bulged over the massive arms and chest in ridges and swells; upon the corded bulk of the forearms crisped a mat of black hair.

"Give you chips, Jack?" inquired Bum, the banker.

"Wait until I get rid of the United States mail up at the boss's," replied the *pro tempore* mail-carrier over his shoulder from the doorway. Seven pairs of hands gathered up the cards dealt round; and the game went on profanely to the nasal clacking of "Chicken in the Straw" over in the corner.

Among those at the table was McMillan, a dark-haired young man to whom clung an atmosphere of gentle breeding and culture, as to fallen Lucifer; something lithe and debonnair about the long figure; something aquiline and

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polite upon the dissipated features. And they called him Bum.

Then there was Husk McKenna, a stunted rag of a man, who confessed to have grown too heavy for a jockey; a scouring of Palm Beach, with a weazened, nicotine-tinted face in which the swine and the fox ravened for supremacy of the small eyes. Truly a cunning, ugly, earthy visage; youth in it withal. He knew horses like a nursery rhyme; but a wind might have blown him away. They called him Husky.

And so it goes. There was Pierre Tabary, the wiry, volatile little French Canadian, with his snapping black eyes, vivid red of cheek and lip, and docile simplicity of nature; his euphonious romance cognomen stood shortened to Pete. The others—take Humpy Nisson, a young fellow of singularly fine carriage; Desperate Scotty, whose chief ambition was peace and plenty of cigarette papers and “makings”—they were all a group of highly individualized casts of mind, with the spark that is youth in every one. There was little, indeed, to suggest the spectacular, romantic, wild-and-woolly possibilities that the average Eastern tourist expects in the West; much in the same train of logic as they consider to have “seen Colorado” from a week at the Antlers Hotel in Colorado Springs, a stop-off at Manitou, and a nose thrust cautiously out of the Pullman window at the Continental Divide. As a matter of fact, there is no more romantic possibility here than there is in a New York livery stable; nor is human nature vastly more picturesque under a sombrero. It is only the pathetic fallacy in human nature once more, which sees battle, murder, and sudden dissolution in a very necessary spur on a very prosaic heel.

At present something was distressing Pete Tabary; the vivid mouth under the little black mustache was turned down dolefully at the corners. Many drafts had he made on the bank; blue, red, and white, the chips all

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went to glut the heap in front of Black Steve. There seemed a general tendency in that direction; indeed, Bum the player owed Bum the banker, quite as much as did Tabary; but he was not a Latin, and, besides, he did not care; the placid mask of the poker adept betrayed no inkling that he constantly held five different cards. Then again, Pete sent money to somebody in Winnipeg occasionally, which makes a difference, you see.

Saturday came in, and with his hands on two proximate shoulders, stood surveying the game, his hat on the back of his head.

"What's biting you, Petrarch? Somebody stacking the cards on you?"

The little Frenchman muttered and peered enviously at the pile before Rohan, minute globules of perspiration shining on his forehead. It was Bum's ante, however.

"Five to play"—with a face like a sphinx.

Pete surveyed his cards with perfectly evident disapproval; he asked for five new ones on the next round, while the others were fondling visionary hopes of straights, flushes, or other beatitudes.

"Good *night!*" a sudden wail from Desperate Scotty. "I've got three of a kind—and six cards."

"Too bad," purred Rohan, offering sardonic advice.

"Why didn't you *eat* that extra one?"

"Well, what's on?"

"Go you five more," pursued Rohan, the dealer. Bum, Nisson, McKenna—nearly every one stuck with him; so did Tabary, with a visage of as much cheerful bluff as a hearse. The betting went several rounds more, and waxed exciting. Suddenly Pete threw down a miserable pair of seven spots.

"Dămn," he said, with a sigh; the crisp accent made the gentle imprecation sound droll and foreign. Rohan's bass broke in with a note of contempt.

"Get out of the game!" he rumbled, in disgust. "What

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in Sam Hill do you try'to play poker with a face like an alarm clock for? Get out of the game! There ain't no excitement reaming babies in arms."

"Call you, Rohan," said the quiet McMillan. The others had dropped out.

"Full house. Aces on sevens."

Burn calmly tossed his cards face downward into the jumble upon the table, without even showing them, and picked up the soiled envelope upon which he kept the rather formidable banking score.

"Ace on seven," mused the Frenchman, wiping his brow on the elbow of his shirt, a beady sense of injustice growing in his eyes. "I have two seven, *aussi*; you have *t'ree, hein?* What you say once, Jack? Some one stack um up? Damn! Ain't I see now why I possess these card *si jolies?*"

Tabary was working himself into a sultry Latin rage; he got up and pushed his chair back, shaking his fist at Rohan.

"Go to bed," said the latter, contemptuously.

"So? And M'sieu the cow t'ief from Arizona, mebbe—what you say?—flimflam me from t'ree month hard work? *Non*, by damn!"

"Hey? What's that?" Black Steve did not believe his ears. "You talking to me, you frog-eater? Why, you little runt, I could bust you acrosst my knee!"

In a burst of wrath he rounded the table and shook the Frenchman by the neck until his teeth rattled. The men crowded about, striving to pacify Rohan, who cast them off like skittles; nevertheless, he ceased to shake Tabary, merely held him by the nape in a grip of iron, thrusting his victim's face almost against the surface of the table. Up in the top bunk the banjo clacked on, thin, nasal, metallic, brittle in the sudden vacuum of sound, for the musician had not even noticed the row. The racket grated on Black Steve.

"Give that tin pan a drink, Carter!" he boomed over a shoulder.

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A man could hear his heart beat on the instant, such a quiet ensued.

"I slip an extra seven into the deck, hey? Well, there's the cards just as they was throwed down; you *find* five sevens—*smell* 'em out"—grinding the helpless face upon the table—"and I'll hand you a block of gold bonds. . . . Now, you toad, I'm going to boot you down to the creek and wash your dirty little mouth out with sand."

As good as his word, he turned Tabary loose and let drive at him as a punter does at a football. The poor fellow hurtled across the room, crumpling with a crash by the door, where he lay, writhing. Rohan followed, and would have kicked the prone body again, but some one tripped him up and he fell on his face.

"Who did that?" he breathed, rising slowly to his feet, his somber visage the quiet of a storm cloud where lightning flickers.

"See to Pete, boys," some one said, in the tense calm; "he's hurt. . . . Well, what are you going to do about it?"

It was Saturday. His face was chalk under the tan; he may have been deathly afraid, but his eye was level upon the other.

Rohan took a stride toward him, and stopped, stupefied. The eyes did not waver; even the color came back high into the man's cheeks.

"I'm perfectly aware that you're able to break me like a toy. Also, that you might get some splinters in your hands doing it. Well, what are you waiting for? For me to run?"

A grudging admiration struggled for expression in the giant's eye; he turned on his heel. As he did so McKenna slid the Colt from the sagging holster.

"You're a well-plucked one," Rohan said to Saturday from his seat on the table, not noticing the theft of his weapon.

"I beg your pardon," resumed the other, with incongruous politeness; "but that isn't all. Hand me that

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gun, Husk. . . . How is Pete, you boys over there? Wind knocked out? That all? Very well. . . . I was about to remark, Mister Rohan, we are not gun-fighters or bad men here, as you know; and we don't admire having any around outside of a cage. I've only been here a couple of months myself; but I'm using all candor with you when I say that until your precious advent, two weeks ago, all was peace and crab apples and brotherly love on the Sleeping Seven. Do you get me? The first day you rope McKenna and drag him through the creek at the end of a lariat for saying, 'Where in blazes did the big, black devil come from?' or some such harmless pleasantry. Off and on since then this place has been a sweet little glimpse of hell. All you lack is horns and a tail with a red-hot barb at the tip. You're a brute from the word go, and you have a temper like Satan himself. What I wish to impart to your attentive mind is that you will either have to control these attacks of diabolic glee or bid us good-by. We're not all six-feet-five, but—wait up there! Since I'm no longer laboring under any apprehension as to your latent ability to 'bust me over your knee,' I'm going to read you a little homily on 'Feet.' . . . Kindly keep your feet off the floor, my dear sir. Tommy, it would undoubtedly be expedient to evacuate your position behind the congregation; by all means bring the banjo. Bullet holes are all right in drum heads, but banjos—oh no! The organist will render a selection during the collection.

"Mr. McMillan, will you be so kind as to enumerate the number of seven spots on the table for Mr. Tabary's benefit? Thank you. Four? Mr. Tabary, the court was under the impression that the accused said 'Aces on Sevens,' not 'Sevens on Aces,' as your rather incomplete knowledge of the game led you to believe. No, Mr. Rohan, you are not a tin horn, but"—suddenly abandoning all mockery, and with a savage intensity—"you are a brutal bully and a disgrace to humanity. Whether you are a coward or not makes no difference."

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At the last words the big man's brows knotted with anger; deliberately he set his feet on the floor and rose to his full stature, his great arms folded.

"Who's the coward?" he mocked. "Why don't you shoot? My feet are on the floor, all right. The coward's at the other end of that gun."

He stood there, titanic, his massive head maned like a black African lion; a splendid virility and power glowing in the deep-set, midnight eyes, glancing from every salient angle of the skull, a joiner's work of high light and shadow, Rembrandtesque, elemental; with high cheekbones; heavy, knotted forehead; jet, Mephistophelean brows, and a jaw like destiny, almost prognathous.

No, he was not a coward. What was he? Perhaps he had never found out himself.

"I don't want to kill you," replied the other, and stepping up returned the weapon to Rohan's holster. "And I won't attempt to read you any lessons, either. A brave man knows that it's a cowardly thing to maltreat one weaker than himself. It's your duty to apologize to Tabary for your brutality."

"Not until he does to me for—"

"I 'pologize, *bien oui*, I 'pologize," bowed Tabary, aglow with Gallic admiration for spectacular fearlessness. And the two shook hands.

"All right, Frenchy. But half-hitch your tongue with them 'thieves and cheaters and liars' that slide off it so easy, after this."

The speaker's eye was arrested by the knot of men who had gathered about Saturday, conversing in low tones, with covert glances in the giant's direction. A spark caught and glowed somberly in the black glance.

"But you—hey, you—you mess-in-other-people's-business," abruptly began the menacing bass purr. "You, turn around—that's right. . . . What call'd you have to butt in, anyway?"

Black gaze rushed to clash with blue in a challenge like

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a stone wall; and neither wavered a whit. Instead, a puzzlement again struggled into the big man's manner—a puzzlement he did not delay uttering in speech.

"I can't make you out, damn you. You don't seem to *care*. . . . But I'll *make* you care"—savagely. He drew out the hand which had strayed to a trousers pocket as he lounged against the table; the lamplight flashed back from a silver half-dollar.

"See that?" Rohan, utterly indifferent to his other auditors, focused a malevolent curiosity upon Saturday. The silver piece rang on the table under his heavy palm. His look, with the faintest hardening of the jaws, was still on Saturday, as of one experimenting in another's psychological processes.

"Well, now you see it and now you don't."

Rohan shifted his hand; the coin lay embedded in the solid deal, flush with the surface, a shining disk which became a cynosure of breathless silence.

"I knew that before," said Saturday, quietly.

"Knew what?" queried the other, puzzled.

"Oh, about the toys—the broken ones—and—"

"And what, you maverick?"

"The splinters," retorted Saturday, leisurely taking off his boots preparatory for bed.

X

ONE FISHES ON TREVETT CREEK

Angling is somewhat like poetry, men are to be born so.

—*Izaak Walton.*

ALL down Trevett the smiling wrath of the mountain shower was over. The sun had shone throughout, his gold transmuted to iridescent pearl and fire-opal by the minute globules of falling mist. Now he burst out in the genial waning of the afternoon, and the streamers of cloud curled gently up the mountainside, leaving the red-purple hue of the rocks above timber line, the dark, straight masses of evergreen and spruce, and the transparent emerald of the valley alike filmed with a sheen of silver. And far down the midst, a molten essence of all this lovely color, as it were, leaped the foaming Trevett. The far roar of the waters now swirled up on the breeze as through the grosser stops of some tremendous organ; again, the volume died away, and there was no sound on the high trail but the rustling of the aspens, the murmur of the vast groves of spruce, with perhaps the petulant vibration of a squirrel's tiny throat from the whispering aisles; a grotesque, whisking, impertinent hamadryad of the place.

Jack Day, one knee crooked over the saddlehorn, was dreaming. He listened as the pony clicked her heels jauntily over the uneven, narrow trail, and was subconsciously aware of the way she nodded briskly down, the sun glistening on the arch of her swelling neck, and the muscles rippling under the silken skin of her shoulders



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ON THE TREVETT

at the sturdy back-set of the descent. He was dreaming; his hat was off, and he was holding an aspen leaf between his lips. Never a bitter thought was present in the man's spirit; that was evident in the boyish curve of the mouth and the softened look of the eyes when the torrent's voice was wafted to his ear. The angry clatter of the squirrel brought a pleased smile to his face and a tolerant, fatherly expression into his voice as he cried out, playfully:

"Go for him, madam! The old man's spoofin' you!"

Down on lower Trevett trail he watched the snipe and sandpipers bobbing their silly bodies upon the sand spits and pebbly bars at the angles of the stream; and he seemed even to derive pleasure from the incessant peeping of the tiresome little wretches.

He was drawing near to a point where the Trevett widened to the shallow riffles of a ford, and the pony was about to plunge noisily in when they were both aware of a solitary angler some few rods down the stream. Sandy pointed her ears inquiringly, and then relapsed into bored indifference. She even essayed a tentative tug at the rein before she philosophically began to mumble the long bottom grass. It was little she understood or cared about the fisherman's convention; but her rider again cocked a knee across the horn and waited for the fisherman to pass the riffles.

The sportsman was a girl. Upon her head was a man's old felt hat, the band of which was carelessly recipient of a few vari-colored trout flies; and the khaki in which she was clad was stained and weather-worn, the skirt even now soaked far above the knee. Some wet grasses peeped out of her creel; and, from what Jack could see of the flies on her leader, she seemed to have the day and the neighborhood gauged like an expert. Her first fly, thought the man, is a Cahill, the second a Grizzly King, the third a Gingerquill; she will have luck.

Even as he was observing, a large trout leaped in a swift, bright curve from the farther eddies, like a scimitar in

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gray smoke; there was a swirl at the leader so that the reel sang; then the rod quivered straight, and the big rainbow was again at large. Jack looked with some curiosity at the girl's face, of which hardly the profile was visible, and sometimes only one small pink ear. What he could see of the oval of a cheek was mantling with expectation, blended with absorption in her occupation; and as she turned about part way to delve in a fly-book he caught a fleeting glimpse of great, darkling eyes that sparkled with rivalry of her finny opponent. She put out her pretty lips thoughtfully at the book; then, with a murmur, slipped it back into a very sensible pocket, gazing considerably at the far ripples, oblivious of the presence of the horseman, near as he was.

Jack, his limbs relaxed and his eye meditative, was drinking in the beauty of air and scene: the mountains already tinged with the purple of evening under the living turquoise, the distant roar of the torrent up the valley, blended with the laughing ripple and choke of the water near at hand, and with the sullen booming of Trevett Falls close below. The pungent, spicy meadow-sweet of the willows and grasses of the bottomland smote upon his nostrils as no incense ever can, and the bubbles winked up at him from the slower edge of the stream with all the good-fellowship in the world. He almost forgot the rosy human vitality of the only living being in view. In the first place, she was a girl, while he was a deep-dyed, relentless misogynist, a scoffer at all womankind. In the second, this was a mere child, if you please, of eighteen or nineteen; *he*, at the advanced age of twenty-five, might have been her father! From which we may see that Jack was mostly boy yet, for all of his use in the ways of men. It is only youth that feels venerable; only disgusted inexperience that is the original and deadly woman-hater.

But, nevertheless, he was almost startled by the glint of this girl's masses of soft brown hair when his eyes came

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back to discover her extracting a tremendous red-and-white fly from the hat in her hands. The hat she sent twirling to the bank with a practised motion, and raised an arm to adjust the flying wisps of hair with a delicacy of movement—reflected our misogynist maliciously—common to cats and women—cats first, an' it please you! Altogether, the girl made a very agreeable picture as she stood there in the midst of the sun-kissed stream, gazing down Trevett to the blue-black of the distant parkland, with the bright fly between lips which its scarlet could not rival, nor its white coarsen. The breeze stirred the errant locks about white neck and temples, and seemed to caress in outline the grace of the lithe figure, swathed in coarse khaki though it were. She hummed a snatch of a rollicking air as she attached the red-and-white monstrosity to the leader, chuckling softly in a sound that was music itself. Jack shook himself.

"Why," wondered he malevolently, "should an apparent goddess take such delight in the frivolous pastime of slaying fish?" He ruminated further upon the analogy between women and cats, and then found himself conjecturing how it would feel to be a fish upon her hook, being almost pleased at the notion. He shook himself again, doggedly. The girl was speaking aloud in a voice which seemed to him to fall into some sort of rhythm and soft harmony with the trilling of the waters and the whisper of the pines, like the lower notes of a violin drawn tenderly. The man shook himself, this time viciously.

"You will never have seen its like before, fair sir," laughed she, at the swirling pool; "but for that very reason you'll covet it the more, dear rainbow!"

And a long, graceful cast flicked the heavy fly without plash to the very border of the black pool. The only immediate result was that a dapper little fox terrier darted out vehemently from the willows and sat down on the bank near this strange, foreign object, regarding it

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with canine suspicion, a beady intensity in his black eyes, his jaws half open for a challenge.

"Down, Patsy!" cried the girl softly, to the recreant. "Be quiet, you rascal, or," she added, with half-real asperity, "mother will smack!"

The little chap squatted in the long grass by the edge and sheepishly licked a muzzle already as black and shining as patent-leather. Then he lay at length, tongue lolling out, a small reciprocal bellows for the nonce—a bellows with half-shut, sun-dazzled eyes, gazing patiently at the fisherman. That young woman cast tentatively once or twice, sinuous ease in each bend of the wrist and elbow, the gaudy fly hovering on the eddies like a thing of life. The great pool had an almost sinister appearance of a calm upheaved by some constant, ever-boiling submarine agency. The broad riffles of the ford merged down into the restless deeps of this natural cauldron, and heaved back strongly from the long curve of the edge, whence the hole narrowed off at an angle to rush in swift power to the lovely but terrible loom of Iris below. Colors might glow and tincture the retina in the headlong foam and roar to the rocks; but flesh and blood could add nothing to the pigment in crushed and strangled transit.

Some inkling of this invaded Jack's mind; still, he noticed that the young woman was standing well up in the shallows of the ford, so he held his peace and waited with a degree of impatience.

"Pth—rrr!" sang the reel stridently, like some wild beast tortured, the rod bent double, the line taut as any bowstring. The girl uttered a cry of triumph. Jack congealed to a statue of sympathetic attention as he sat sideways, eyes glued to the crazy zigzags, circles, and dashes of the line across the water and the furious nodding and pivoting of the rod.

"Keep him out of the willows!" he shouted, in an access of interest and forgetfulness. The girl gave no sign that she heard, as she edged slowly over to the farther bank,

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her eyes following every flicker of the line on the water, the slack gathered in her left hand. Both were intent on the work in hand, and did not note that the struggles of the heavy trout were drawing her gradually toward the edge.

A slip, a clutch, a piercing cry, and both knew it! The last pebbly edge crumbled under her, and she slipped feet foremost into the black depths. Jack, dumb with horror, whipped out of the saddle, and in his haste fell headlong down the steep bank, crushing his face into the hard pebbles of the ford. He was up again in a twinkling, blinded by the sand and water and half dazed by the fall. The first thing he saw was a white, still face emerging for an instant from the midst of the pool. That sight formed a permanent picture in his memory: the great, dragged masses of gleaming brown hair, the colorless face and lips, the closed eyes, the head that sagged so wearily back from the limp, lovely throat. He thought dimly that she was hurt, and straightway plunged drunkenly in.

The icy clutch of water straight from the snows caught his breath with a gasp at its suddenness. Then his dazed faculties sprang back. He seemed to see every separate rock around the rim as he thrust up his half-blind, bleeding face, and he even caught the gleam of excitement in the little dog's eyes as the latter bounded up and down along the high, sheer bank, shaken with a paroxysm of barking that the submerged man could hardly hear. A few yards below him the girl's heavy hair floated an instant to the top like a clot of dark blood in the slant sun; and with a few powerful, cumbered strokes he meshed a hand in it and drew her to the surface. They were in the constricted outlet of the pool; the bank seemed rushing past them, for the grip of the swift narrows now closed upon both. The booming of the falls smote upon his brain like the bass of Fate; his limbs felt numbed with a chill of something besides the water.

His boots and clothing seemed to drag him down and for-

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ward like an incubus; he gripped the long locks of the girl with a clutch entirely instinctive. Still a scant two rods from the dizzy plunge, his hand brushed a willow—clutched, slipped, snapped it with a pang as of death—then clenched iron fingers upon a thick withe Providence closed them on. He hung there, flaunted like a streamer of moss along the arrowy flood, breathless, his frame racked by the bitter wrench of the surge upon that one wrist. The girl's body dragged heavily upon his other arm. He had utterly forgotten about her for the moment, and now the fear shot through him that she had drowned. Putting forth an ebbing strength, he drew her up beside him, so that her face was close by his shoulder and one limp arm hung over his neck. The sleeve he seized in his teeth. All this he did instinctively, mechanically, his brain still numbed with the horror of the falls.

Now, as he clung to the bough with both hands, and had time to consider and seek for safety, he was invested by opiate exhaustion. His limbs streamed flexless along the current; his forearms felt clogged, and ached with weariness; even the muscles of his jaws began to feel cramped against his burden. A shooting pain anguished his head and neck, the result of his fall into the riffles. All around rose the sheer rock of the narrow gorge, overhung in places by long boughs from the willows; but nowhere did a foothold offer itself against the tumult of the stream. The strain on his arms and neck became, not weariness, but throes of agony.

For one brief breath an image focused on the writhing screen of his brain—an image of him pulling himself up to safety and rest by the willow withe—alone. It was only an image, and he cast it out in scorn. But the place thereof flickered with livid violet flame, and a voice in his soul cried out, "*Rest!*" to which a whisper answered, "*Alone!*" He groaned aloud in his agony, for a strong man dies hard; the weaker escape the greater pangs.

"I can't, I can't!" moaned the man within himself, in

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despair of the endurance to hold on much longer. The weary head sagged backward over his shoulder. The waves of hair were so dragged now, the features which had glowed with rosy color but five minutes ago held a terrifyingly beautiful likeness to the pallor and gloss of Parian marble. She was so helpless, so dependent on his failing strength, that he could have wept. The closed eyelids with their delicate blue veins seemed to read the secrets of the ages. As he still looked they fluttered back and forth over the blue wells beneath, and he felt her stir on his back with a little moan. He shut his own eyes and prayed to Something—he knew not what.

It seemed an eternity that he clung there, his jaw steeled to resolution and the wrench of the rapids upon the fold of cloth he gripped in his teeth. Then, outlined sharply against the azure rim of the sky, he saw through a veil of apathy the head of the fox terrier, ears erect, eyes twinkling, barking eagerly at this new prank of his mistress, a fiendish, innocent mockery of his suffering. Just so had the little dog itched to express an opinion on the red-and-white fly. A fly—strange how something stirred in the paralyzed association centers of the man's brain! A fly, a gut leader, a silk line—a line, a *line*, repeated the drowsy mentor. . . . A spark of new energy seared its way along the cold circuit from Despair to Hope. Grimly he gripped the willow with one hand while he drew the fly-book from the girl's gaping pocket with the other. Yes, it was there—a thick coil of enameled line! The fly-book whisked away and over the falls unheeded.

. . . Some loops of that line, knotted with the numb fingers of one hand to the willow branch and the unconscious girl's clothing; but they were waxed with his blood before he was able to drag himself up to the high bank. For the wrench of the surge sometimes lacerated cruelly the one hand he had to work with, the line biting into the

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flesh like wire. The arm that had been clinging to the bough was all but paralyzed when he at last dragged himself to the top of the sheer bank and fell headlong into the willows, exhausted. Still the same scorn of pain forced him again to his knees and steeled bloodless sinews to the drawing up of his companion's limp weight. The task seemed eternal, infinitely beyond his failing forces. Lights danced in fantastic designs before his dim eyes, and the whole universe seemed but one vast swoon. He did not even sigh as he fell back in a crushed bower of leaves, with the girl's body across his knees.

XI

ON HEROES

Who is the happy Warrior? Who is he
That every man in arms should wish to be? . . .

—Wordsworth.

A MAN was asleep in the hammock that swayed imperceptibly to and fro on the cozy veranda of the Mason house up Trevett. Over his face lay a sheet of the *New York Times*; and his breathing was quiet and deep upon the background of the breeze in the aspens and the more distant, slumbrous roar of Trevett Falls. A peaceful place, with the light and shadow of the leaves shivering over the dimmer recess of the porch. Close by a robin was throbbing intermittently; but the long leg in white flannel that sagged out of the hammock did not stir. The sun was almost down; some one was musing softly over a piano indoors, when a swift rattle of claws invaded the sacred precinct of the sleeper. The fox terrier sniffed tentatively at the leg in white flannel, then made an ineffectual attempt to nose a way through the screen doors. At last the dog sat down beside the hammock with a plaintive expression on his face. He whined; then, in a sudden afflatus of desperation, seized the flannel in his teeth, shaking it and growling. The figure in the hammock started up, hurling the paper at the interloper and muttering vexation. Patsy growled stridently from the steps.

"Confound the whelp!"

But the dog was making incomprehensible advances and retreats, looking first at the man, then up the gulch.

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He whined. The man stretched his long limbs and passed his hand through a tousled head of hair like amber. He was a big man, and his face was a handsome study in irritation; he put a hand on the screen door, only to be assaulted anew by his canine tormentor. A well-aimed kick was stopped in its beginning; abrupt significance attached itself in his mind to the dog's behavior, and he smiled cynically to himself as he remembered all the bosh he had read in books about canine intelligence. The dog shot off up the gulch and was back in a trice, while the man still mused sleepily, his hand on the door knob. A filament of uneasiness lit up somewhere in his sleep-drugged consciousness.

"That settles it."

The big man set off after the fox terrier in his shirt sleeves, the breeze stirring his fair hair.

There they lay, the girl across the knees of a man whose features he did not distinguish in the darkness.

"Margaret!" he cried, sharply, raising the limp form against his own knee. The falls boomed below.

"Margaret!" he cried, a chill creeping along his spine. He shook her as one shakes a sleeper, but desperately; and the masses of wet, fragrant hair brushed his face, falling back over his shoulder. Suddenly the girl burst into a paroxysm of coughing, and seemed to waken from a nightmare, clutching at the man's arm.

"Oh, I'm choking! Daddy! Where am I? . . . My head hurts so."

She caught a deep breath, and again the spasm of coughing seized her. The girl drooped over his arm like one deathly sick; the water from her drenched clothing penetrated to his own skin through the thin shirt, and her agonized hiccoughs shook the bodies of both. His numbness of brain left him with a sudden pang of fear. She would die if he did not do something, and quickly! He beat upon her back with awkward hands that feared to hurt.

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"No, no, Daddy! Take me home. . . . I'm so sick."

She had called him "Daddy"; she did not know him! He was a powerful man; he started up with the girl's shuddering body in his arms, but found himself entangled in some cord connecting her to the motionless figure of the stranger, whom he had forgotten. With an exclamation he burst asunder the line in his strong hands, and started away down the gulch, almost running, the girl like a feather over his great shoulder.

Late Tuesday morning a man lay in a top bunk in the bunk-house of the Sleeping Seven. All the other bunks were empty, and he was scarcely half awake to the strong reflection of the outside sun upon the yellow half-logs of the roof. He did not move, because when he had tried to get up before a shooting pain wavered along the nerves of all the upper part of his body; and when he sat up nausea gripped him so that he felt limp and nerveless. No, he would not move. The boys had not disturbed him; only Sandy Hallowell had come in and felt over his body for broken bones, his shrewd Scotch face, with its stubby, grizzled beard, tempered with a certain anxiety. But he found none.

"Into the creek," was all Sandy could make of his feeble utterance.

"Stumbled wi' ye in the creek, eh, Jack?" the foreman had said. "And I warrant ye were banged a-weel afore ye got quat o' the rocks. I ken, my laddie. Gae to 't; sleep it off. The pony? Aye, she's chipper, and wud be spiering for your guid health at the door early the morning. The boys had to put her in the paddock to keep her frae coming ayont the door to see ye."

Then Sandy had gone out and left him alone in the quiet bunk-house. As he lay he could hear the half-musical note the windmill over by the corral trough kept making with the shifts of the wind, and perhaps a

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far shout from the busy breaking-pens. For the Sleeping Seven was a horse ranch, and breaking to saddle and harness was a daily necessity of the trade.

So he mused and tried not to move. The night had been one long nightmare of racked sinews and the nausea of exhaustion, after he had come to consciousness of the chill of his wet garments under the cold sky of the night altitudes. How he had reached home he did not know; that was the nightmare, the eternity of toiling over the single mile home. He had even fallen down and crawled, he remembered, with the pain of his twisted back and neck. . . . Well, he couldn't sleep, that was a cinch. Painfully his hand groped about the saddlebags hung on a nail beside him, near a gaudy cover of the *London Illustrated News*. There, he had it; he breathed a sigh and turned over the dog-eared pages of *Sartor*. "The Everlasting No" was absorbing his attention when some one approached the open door, talking. A shock, almost galvanic, appeared to stir the reader; he roused to an elbow, then abruptly turned his face to the wall.

Outside the door a rich, silky depth of voice was saying:

"So they told me. Was he badly hurt? I'm interested to know."

"Oh, I guess his pony only drapped the lad in the creek. Want to see him? He'll be blithe to tell ye about it."

"Horse dumped him in the creek? . . . Just a moment. Is that all he had to say about it?"

There was a note of wonder and conjecture in the fine voice.

"Aye, sure, Mr. Spenser."

So *this* was the magnate of Bighorn Consolidated, who was stopping over at Mason's! *This* was one of the Spenser interests in the West! A tremor ran over the man in the bed as the man in question entered the bunk-house, saying:

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"I won't take up your time any more, Mr. Hallowell. I'll just step in myself and talk to him. Day, you say, is his name?"

Jack felt the cool scrutiny come to focus on the back of his head upon the pillow; the hair seemed to crisp and tingle under it. He was hardly conscious of what Spenser said in introducing himself and asking how he was; merely of the easy patronage which some men assume so unconsciously toward those whom they consider their inferiors. Jack replied to this polite solicitude in grunts and muffled monosyllables without turning, even drawing up the blanket closer about his ears.

For a moment there was an honest warmth of feeling in Kenneth's voice as he thanked him in terms for himself and the girl's family.

"It was a brave thing to do," he concluded.

Jack did not see the irresolution and conflict between desire and first intention in the fine face—will molded it at one instant, even a certain nobility of purpose—only to be replaced once and again by a flash of eagerness and a frown of perplexity. Kenneth sat there silent, fingering the fringe of his gloves.

At last something prevailed in the man's mind. Perhaps the scales weighed down to the recollection of the scent of fragrant hair, a lissom weight in a man's arms, soft, unconscious woman's arms about a man's neck. Who knows? Kenneth cleared his throat.

"You have lived here some time?"

A grunt.

"Your wages cannot be very high. I—you see—we'd like to do something for you."

No reply.

"Now—well, I'm interested in a big cattle ranch in Montana. They—that is—we need a foreman."

A pause.

"What's that?" Spenser strained his ears to the queer, muffled tones.

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"I'm satisfied," he caught. "I like it *here*."

A scowl darkened the big man's face; for a moment he was silent. Finally he gave up these overtures in disgust.

"Well, let's come to the point, then," he said, in cold annoyance. "How much do you want—how much—to *get out*?"

"What?" blurted out the man in the top bunk.

"Oh, you know, all right." Jack could almost see the look Spenser cast doorward and then back at him. "I make it fifty."

The tone was one of scornful appraisal. Jack understood not a whit of what the other was driving at; but a devil of curiosity urged him on to say in a gruff key:

"Make it five hundred."

The other became irritable at once, in a heavy, feline way.

"Don't you see, it's only your word against mine, confound you? They all think *I* saved Miss Mason's life. I haven't *said* so; but if I should, where would *you* be, my man?"

The tone was ugly enough. Jack lay still a moment while the content of the thought burned through him. All his own first feelings of humiliation at being recognized in such a status by this man deserted him, leaving militant contempt in their place. Bodily pains appeared also to have been spirited away. He sat up and slowly clasped his knees, looking steadily at Kenneth out of his clear eyes without a word. The latter caught his breath; a minute might have passed while the two looked silently at each other. Then:

"Jack!"

Jack ignored the hand. His face, with the dried blood stains on the brows, was set in the same stubborn lines as of old. At last he spoke, scathingly.

"Well, I see you're in the same old sneak's progress you started four years ago."

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Kenneth swallowed; his hand lowered slowly; under the Stetson his fine features clouded with the rich blood; beneath the immaculate khaki mining clothes his broad shoulders squared defiantly.

"You don't understand. I—I was more or less forced into it, Jack," he exclaimed.

"I see," remarked Jack, with impersonal curiosity. "You are finding it more and more constitutionally impossible to do things in the way your ancestors did them."

Kenneth missed the satire, he was so eager in argument.

"You see, Jack, it's this way. It's a thing *you* couldn't possibly have any interest in; but it's terribly important to me."

He pulled out a cigarette-case with slow, half-clumsy absorption, and offered a cigarette to Jack. Jack declined it. Kenneth lit his own, and resumed at once. Jack's eyes were studying him steadily, their expression inscrutable.

"You don't understand?" Kenneth muttered, at last. Those eyes were somehow hard to meet. "Well, you don't even know Miss Mason, do you? But I—I intend to marry her. You see?"—appealingly.

"No," said Jack, crisp and downright, "I don't."

Spenser's brows knit in irritation.

"Not to mince matters, then, you ought to be able to see that it's an advantage to have the girl you're going to marry think you've saved her from a horrible death."

"Quite obviously," nodded Jack.

Kenneth's face brightened.

"And then," he resumed, "knowing you as I do, I'm certain you'd never interfere in such a thing. It would seem like—like pushing for a reward."

Jack laughed at the man's ingenuous selfishness.

"You won't, will you?" asked Kenneth. He didn't like that laugh; it made things look less assured.

"I wish," replied Jack, with thin-veiled sarcasm—"I wish you'd cease to show how well you understand me."

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You really do—wonderfully—in spite of your own more brilliant procedure in this matter of life.”

He paused, only to survey the fine-looking chap on the chair below, a shifting spark in his eyes.

“What are you thinking?” inquired Kenneth, in sudden heat.

“I’m thinking,” returned the other, evenly, “what a thorough cad you are, for all your fine physique and polished manner—and ancestry. I’m thinking what a disgrace you are to your family. It’s well only your sister is left to be ashamed of you. I wouldn’t like to see her pain and disillusionment when she takes a seeing glance at what a fine fellow you *are*.”

Kenneth rose, clenching his hands, his handsome features distorted with one of the sinister, hereditary rages of his family.

“I’m thinking,” went on Jack, sternly, “that I wouldn’t live the life you lead for all the millions ever minted. Nobody has ever told you what you are. I will. It may do you good. You are probably one of the most selfish creatures on the earth. You are a liar, a coward, and a sneak.”

Spenser is hardly to be blamed for boiling under this relentless unleashing of scorn. He made a lightninglike clutch at Jack’s throat, his eyes jet black and shot with savage flame, like an animal’s.

“You—you!” he stammered, almost a glaze upon his sight in his rage. “I’ll strangle you first, damn you, before I’ll let you say a word to disgrace me before—her!”

The great hands shook Jack until his brain burned; it seemed to stir an effervescing madness in his veins. He caught the other’s forearms under his own in a wrestler’s trick he had never used till then.

“Get out of here, you cur dog,” he gasped, leaning over the edge of the bunk, as Kenneth sprang up from the floor, white with the agony of his elbow.

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"You've broken my arm!" he said, thickly.

"Yes, you pup, I've broken your arm," mocked Jack. "Your neck would have been a greater service to the country."

A certain aspect of doggedness in the other surprised Jack.

"Get out! I never want to see your face again. I wouldn't meddle with the slime you stir up for a peck of diamonds. I don't care what you say."

And he turned his face to the wall again, drawing up the blankets to his chin. Kenneth stopped with a hand outstretched.

"I'll break your back, you—you—"

"Go ahead, and welcome," sneered the man in the blankets. "It's quite immaterial to me."

The pain in Spenser's arm agonized him; he felt faint and ill. The air in the low building waxed suddenly oppressive; the articles of masculine apparel lying in promiscuous deshabille about the tumbled tiers of bunks assumed an expression of mockery. A lithograph of Lina Cavaliere, a smudge of lampblack across her nose, regarded him insolently under lowered lashes. He wanted to groan with his dislocated elbow; he wanted to be ten thousand miles from the sound of steady breathing in that bunk; he wanted to choke the life out of—

Policy, as was natural with him, came to his rescue. In a flash it appeared to him that *he* was the wronged man. *He* had done no wrong. *He* had said nothing, had told no falsehoods. He had, and he would say nothing; nor, it insidiously entered his mind, would he deny anything. If *she* thought, if they thought—why, let them think. . . . Dissembling the pain that seared along his whole left arm, he quitted the bunk-house without a word. In the cluttered seclusion of what Sandy called his "office," in the foreman's house at the home ranch, he allowed himself the luxury of a groan before he took down the receiver of the telephone.

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Another day had scarcely dawned on the Sleeping Seven; the night mists were hardly beginning to rise from the parkland, but flowed in milky estuaries about the lower summits, as about woody islands. The peaks were flooded with pink, and warm flakes of it gradually floated down to earth through the cold, slow-undulating vapors; the east one cool tinge of silver, pale blue, and rose. Far along the swimming meadows the hundreds of grazing horses came to view like tiny figures in a mirage painting.

Jack felt he had been years too long abed. Stiff and sore as he still was, the young blood had surged back; he felt like a colt which had been in the corral too long. No one else had risen, and he was performing his simple ablutions alone at the tin basin on the starch box just outside the door. He was reveling in the icy water upon his face, and was sluicing his head and neck with it, when he was aware of two horsemen splashing through the ford and mounting the slope toward the bunk-house. One of the men, a spare, wiry individual in what appeared to be the dress of a mining man, surveyed the young fellow sharply with eyes like gray steel before he vouchsafed a good morning. He looked again at the square figure in the close undershirt before he opened conversation, noting with veiled approval the defined swell of sinew on the bared arms, the bunchy deltoids, and, above all, the glowing young face with its clear eyes and clinging mop of wet hair. Then he showed the badge of a United States marshal, swung off his white horse, and approached the doorway.

"After a man named Nichols, Steve Nichols," he announced laconically, peering at the stertorous tiers of bunks within, tentatively, as it were. Jack mopped his head and neck with the towel, harboring an uncomfortable, prickly feeling that something was about to happen. He entered after the two men with a premonition of trouble. As he stood with his back to the door, answering some of the whispered questions of the marshal,

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he heard a rustle in an upper bunk. His blood froze for the moment; there crouched Black Steve with his gun out, his midnight eyes glittering upon the marshal as he talked.

"Nichols, Nichols?" Jack heard himself saying. "A big, black sort of a man, powerful as a bull? Yes, a man like that came along two weeks ago; but the next we heard of him was over—Cochetopa way. Nobody here now but the regular ranch staff. There they all are; you can look 'em over."

Covertly he signaled the refugee with his hand. The marshal hardly glanced at the bunks; and Steve had sunk out of sight among the blankets, anyway. Uncle Sam's delegate drew a breath of relief, and disengaged a hand from something he held in his coat pocket. Tiny globules of the sweat of released tension burst out on his forehead as he bespoke his deputy.

"I didn't think he'd 'a' stuck around here, anyway, Pink. Chuck it"—as the deputy shook a doubtful head. "He ain't here, you rummy. . . . Man killed a greaser down on the Sonora line," explained the reprieved marshal to Jack, "with in-ter-na-tion-al com-pli-ca-tions, they said at headquarters. I ain't rightly got the hang of whether he didn't have good reason to shoot the greaser up; but that ain't none of my business. An ugly customer with a six-gun, though, and this bunk-room 'ud be an uglier place to meet up with him. I ain't disappointed."

The marshal laughed shortly. He and his minion clumped outside. Jack watched them splash away through the ford with a feeling as of pressure removed from bursting ear drums. They were dwindling dots on the meadow road when he turned from the door at last.

"Put it there," breathed Black Steve from his deep chest, hand out, face softened with gratitude. "You set him off neat, pardner."

Jack proceeded to rub his head anew with the towel, as though he did not know Nichols *alias* Smith *alias* Rohan

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was there, literally towering before him. At length, however, the towel became rank subterfuge. Jack looked coldly at the mingled gratitude, puzzlement, and anger on the giant's face, then at the outstretched hand.

"I don't mind telling you"—as he turned away—"that I did what I did merely because I did not want to see another man shot down."

XII

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

Some day I shall meet you,
Love, I know not when or how,
Only this, that once you loved me,
Only this, I love you now.

—*Conway.*

JACK, the usually good-humored, 'if sometimes moody Jack, was in a despicable frame of mind as he cinched up his saddle.

Sandy Hallowell had approached the breaking-pens as the procedure had scarcely started that morning, calling aloud in his distortion of English to find out if any of the boys were acquainted with Elkins, the shift boss at the Blennerhassett Mine in upper Trevett, had ever worked there, knew anything about the mine. Evidently, nobody had or did. In an unguarded moment Jack admitted a close knowledge of the workings and personal acquaintance with the boss; yes, he had worked there, "mucking" below.

"Ye've sure had the wanderlust, my lad," Sandy observed, his eye on the practised grip Jack kept on the nose of the two-year-old he was about to mount for the first time. Then, "This time it brought ye a day off, anyway."

And the foreman went on to explain that Miss Mason had telephoned that Mr. Spenser, her father's cousin, who was staying with them, had large interests in the Blennerhassett and wished to make a private examination of the mine without the matter coming to the knowledge

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of the company's manager. Could Sandy send some one who knew about those workings to show Mr. Spenser through? Yes, indeed, Sandy would do anything for Miss Margaret. But he was having trouble with the ways and means until he struck Jack.

Jack hemmed and hawed; had rather work, etc. How was he to tell Hallowell that a week ago he had dislocated this same cousin's elbow? Sandy, shrewd in the ways of independent Western labor, had asked it as a personal favor. Jack liked Sandy; what was he to do? Then the humor of it struck him. He laughed aloud at the thought of Kenneth's face when he should see his guide! So, after all, he went on his way rejoicing, chirping the ditty of "The Ocean Waves May Roll" into the pony's back-turned ears, as they cantered off toward the upper house with a led horse following.

It was not long before he arrived at the bark-covered bungalow of Mr. Mason, the owner of the Sleeping Seven, where it nestled bowerlike on the side of the steepy rift of Trevett, in a shivering green mist of quaking aspens. Jack had been there several times before, carrying the mail from below, or he had passed it on his jaunts up and down the gulch. He had wondered idly what manner of man it was who dwelt there, and yet was never seen.

So these were Masons of Virginia, and related to the Spensers! It looked as though he would have to move again. But he liked the Sleeping Seven and its happy crew; besides, Kenneth probably would not stay long.

The sun shimmered through the trellised hop vines of the porch. He would have to knock. No, here came some one.

A youngster of ten came romping out, slamming the screen door after him. He stood on the double step and took in Jack Day and the two horses with a pair of big blue eyes in a ruddy, sun-peeled face. Jack was lolling in the saddle making a cigarette.

"Hello," said the boy.

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"How are you, commodore?" replied Jack, lighting the cigarette behind cupped hands. "When 'll Mr. Spenser be ready to start?"

"Is that the man with the horses, Harry? I'll be out in ten minutes."

Kenneth's voice from far within; Jack grinned with expectation.

"Is that your horse, mister?" asked the boy.

Jack dismounted and came to sit on the steps beside the youngster, leaving the reins of both horses dangling in the short curve of the drive. Jack liked "kids."

"Sandy, shake hands with the gentleman."

The pony came almost upon the steps, raising a pawing front hoof to the boy.

"And what is *your* name?" inquired Jack, watching the delighted boyish expression as the youngster put his hand on the bent fetlock, shaking it gravely.

"Henry Rutherford Spenser Mason," said the boy, mechanically, his blue eyes absorbed in admiration of the intelligent bay face with its delicately pointed ears, so wide between the eyes, a white blaze on the forehead.

"He's a peach, isn't he?" observed the boy, eyes sparkling.

"Of the Wyoming variety," agreed Jack. "Some of his ancestors may have come from Kentucky; but he's a lady. It isn't every cow pony that gets named after the heroine of an opera. This is Sandy, prima donna of *Pelleas and Melisande*."

Harry was silent in boyish confusion at making a mistake. Sandy regarded her master patiently with arched neck. Jack had been becoming conscious, in the weird way so well known to psychologists, of some one standing behind the screen door, watching, probably for some time. He caught a glimpse of a skirt, and rose to his feet, taking off his hat. A little flutter, as if to retreat, then a visible recognition of the fact that it was too late. The girl pushed open the screen and came out upon the porch

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like one in a dream, her eyes fixed on the young man in chaparreras and open waistcoat standing there with his hat in his hand.

"Oh!"

Violet Spenser, lovelier than ever, her face crimsoned and white by turns. The same phenomenon might have been noted on Jack's countenance.

"You are mistaken, ma'am," he said, coolly. "My name is Day, Jack Day."

Violet regarded him with widening eyes, the flush, this time of angry pride, again burning her cheeks. Her eyes flashed as she comprehended.

Jack blessed his folly internally; he had not dreamed *she* would be here, too.

"What's that?"

"How old is she?" repeated the boy.

"Twenty-two"—before he thought. It was his turn to blush. Violet laughed aloud—a peal of the silver bells he used to love to hear; 'tis true they started a trifle hysterically.

"As old as that!" The boy's face was long with amazement. "Why, she's three years older than my sister!"

Jack recovered his equanimity, knitting his brows judicially.

"I guess I made a mistake," he said. "Sandy, tell young Mr. Mason your age."

The pony began to paw the ground in the old, established way, with an anxious look at the hand wagging at Jack's side.

"One, two, three, four, five," counted the boy. "Gee, she is a peach, isn't she?"

Violet was looking at Jack, her eyes dark and hard. Gradually a softened expression entered them, and the violet light came to play there. She turned and re-entered the house. Jack immediately sat down to collect his wits. A thousand forgotten emotions were chasing them—

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selves through his consciousness. He—yes, he'd have to leave the Sleeping Seven—he and Sandy. He looked affectionately at the pony as she lay at length in the drive, playing dead for the boy at her master's command. She was watching him out of her soft eyes, expecting the word to get up.

"You have a way with horses, Mr.—?"

"Day, ma'am."

Jack was on his feet again, looking squarely into the big blue eyes behind the screen, almost on a level with his own from the slight door ledge. It was the girl with whom he had narrowly missed going over Trevett Falls. He had not noticed before how wide apart those eyes were, and calm, and wholesome, and strong. She looked a rosy young nymph with her hair in the wavy Psyche knot and the breeze blowing the light stuff of her waist against her round arms. Jack liked the checked gingham apron, coming high in front; it had a homy look. And he liked the firm, elastic step when she came out to feed Sandy sugar.

"Surely," came Kenneth's voice from within, pleased, "you and Margaret may come along. Be glad to have you. But you've got to be good. Mind, I'm a cripple. . . . I'll 'phone down to Hallowell for two more horses, gentle ones, with side-saddles."

"Please don't make me ride side-saddle," begged the girl outside, laughing. "I'd fall off at once."

It was the same rich contralto of the ford, the lower strings of the violin drawn tenderly. And she, too, entered the house. Jack relit his cigarette and waited. Patsy, the fox-terrier, came up and put his paws on the young man's knee, to be petted. All animals loved Jack; it was a case of love at first sight with them.

Presently Kenneth appeared, immaculate in khaki and puttees, and the four dents in his hat. His arm was slung from his neck in a black sling; but he was whistling. Jack grinned at the sudden change in Kenneth's face

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when he saw who was "the man with the horses," but the humor passed quickly from that smile. Spenser had started forward with a smothered oath, and the look on his handsome face was ugly indeed.

"Good morning," he said, with an effort.

Harry was looking at the fox terrier with speculation in his eyes; Patsy was having his head rubbed, unaware of the plots against the even tenor of his life being hatched in his young master's mind. Kenneth went in again, but promptly returned with a certain sinister reserve of manner. It was a strange, mute pair who sat with their backs against the pillars on opposite sides of the steps, waiting for the horses and for the girls.

And now came Steve Rohan, with the two horses in leash and riding a third.

"Hello, Jack," greeted Steve, with an obvious wish to be friendly.

Jack nodded to him gravely. Steve dismounted and tied the two horses to a ring on the steps; evidently they would not stand "tied to the ground." They were "ladies' mounts," not cow ponies. A sullen glint came into Steve's black eyes. Day would not speak to him, wouldn't he? . . . He was about to remount when he noticed a nondescript collie, which had been hanging around the Sleeping Seven cook-house for months, sidling apologetically up the short drive. There was a suave, ingratiating expression on the dog's face; he had suspicions that it was grub-pile time, probably. Black Steve hated that look; besides, all his suppressed anger at Jack sought outlet.

"Git—you!" he roared, his face a thundercloud of passion.

The collie whinged and slunk, his tail between his legs, his head drooping to the ground. Instead of running from Rohan, however, he rolled over supinely upon his back, his paws tucked up to his chest, an epitome of abject submission. It was the last straw. Exploding into a rumble

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of oaths, Rohan kicked the prone body savagely. The dog crept brokenly into the aspens, crying like a child.

"You remember what I said once, Rohan," began Jack, a white, dangerous expression coming over him. But Margaret Mason, in sombrero and divided khaki skirt, appeared, and was moving over toward the aspens, calling softly. The poor beast came crawling out, and licked her gloved hands.

"I'd let the dirty dog alone if I were you, Margaret," observed Spenser, hardly turning his leonine head.

Margaret did not say a word to Steve, but the giant was utterly abashed.

"I'm sorry, Miss," he said, awkwardly, turning his hat in his hands.

Margaret ignored him; she was murmuring soothing endearments to this waif she had never seen before, as though it were a child that had fallen. She had her gloves off, and was feeling for broken bones.

"That comes of studying to be a trained nurse," remarked Kenneth, with an attempt at humor. Margaret was kneeling, with the dog's head in her lap; she looked up finally, cheeks flushed, hair in wavy wisps about her ears, eyes wide with indignation.

"This dog's leg is broken in two places," she said, addressing Rohan for the first time. "You are brutal."

Steve threw back his head.

"I said I was sorry"—sullen and proud—"and I am. . . . I ain't never met a man yet that liked me; no, nor a beast either. They're all afraid of me. There's only one ain't, and he hates me. Can't I see?" His voice waned low and bitter. "I would like to have people like me, but—"

He threw back his head again and laughed shortly; his tone waxed louder and more defiant.

"Rot! I don't give a—don't care a cuss for other people's opinion of me. There's a hundred men I know of that's just itching to take a shot at me. But they're afraid. They'd howl for joy if they could down Black

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Steve. They hate me; but they're afraid. Think I care?" Then, in a lower key: "Sometimes I get sort o' lonesome; don't think you'd understand. It's my own lookout; but there ain't a dog I ever knew but what 'd slink when I was anywheres round, nor a horse that don't flatten back his ears when I get on him. I boot that yip of a collie every time I see him—but wonder how I'd be if he didn't whinge and crawl, but wagged his tail, and was pleased to see me?"

Violet came out with a small black case of Margaret's, and the girl had Jack Day busy breaking splints out of a fruit box. Her head was bowed, and Rohan could not tell whether she was listening or not. He mounted his horse.

"You ain't listening to me, Miss, and I ain't much caring. But the bronc ain't foaled anywheres that can throw me, nor the dog living that 'd dare to growl at me twice. No, nor the man that 'd blackguard me twice. None of 'em can down me, not one."

He turned a savage gaze momentarily on Jack Day.

"No, I don't give a whoop in a hospital for what any of 'em think."

His horse wheeled under the spur. Margaret raised her eyes with a certain pity in them; Rohan reined up in a panic at something so unprecedented.

"I don't think I'm much different from you," she said, softly. "We're both on this earth and can be kind or cruel just as we choose. But I *want* everybody to like me, and I want to like them. You might not believe it, but it's so much happier a way to live. You ought to try it, just to find out."

Steve rode off down the gulch, subdued, his head bowed toward his breast. He was ashamed for the first time in his life; it seemed that there was a pair of big blue eyes inside him somewhere, looking out at him with that strange expression of pity—and horror, too.

Kenneth objected, from his seat on the steps, to the

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waste of so much time; it was with the same lazy dignity habitual to him. But his eyes were on Jack, over the collie with the two girls, holding splints on the broken paw for Margaret to fasten. Violet, with the scissors, saw that look, and it was not a pleasant one. She had wondered how Kenneth would act to Jack; the inner conflict that had impelled her to coax her brother to take her along was still raging. Jack, there, in the rough workaday clothes, bending over the dog and gently holding the leg so as not to hurt, was gradually opposing in her mind the immaculate figure of her brother with his "Let the dirty dog alone." Violet did not reason; she wanted to cry, and she was not thinking of the collie. Jack, the bandaged scarecrow in his arms, was being convoyed back of the house by Margaret.

The eyes of brother and sister met. It was a study in converging and diverging expressions.

Jack had started to ride behind in silence, as he thought, bitterly, became a servant, a groom. But Margaret would not have it so; imperceptibly he found himself doing the cicerone on a basis of full equality. He preserved his cowpuncher "ma'am" as a defense. Margaret was puzzled at the irrefragable evidences of education and culture contrasted with that "ma'am" of the ranches and the miners' boarding-houses.

They paused once at the edge of the seething cauldron of rock masses into which thundered Trevett Falls, the high green of the willows dewed and shaken by the breath of the monster. Margaret was watching the play of the rainbow in the convex foam fire of the cataract, with a half-horror in her eyes.

"I still think that fall is the prettiest thing in the world," she said, with a glance at Kenneth's arm, crooked beneath his coat. He looked ashamed for a reason she did not guess. "But I owe it to you that I am not the 'Maid of the Mist.'"

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Jack, once the book-lover, thought her gesture of gratitude *was* the prettiest thing he had ever seen, but her use of the *word* in connection with the falls unpardonable. He could hide his contempt for the misuse of words; but he could not keep the mute approval out of his face when Violet ventured:

"It is sublime."

Her eyes encountered his, approval and all. A sudden bolt of enthusiasm shot into the man's face; he pointed at the cloudy welter to the rocks.

"Do you see that clear bow of colors, that shifting prism that moves to and fro below there? Only one man ever caught that—quite:

"Horribly beautiful! but on the verge,
From side to side, beneath the glittering morn,
An Iris sits, amidst the infernal surge,
Like Hope upon a death-bed, and, unworn
Its steady dyes while all around is torn
By the distracted waters, bears serene
Its brilliant hues with all their beams unshorn;
Resembling, 'mid the torture of the scene,
Love watching Madness with unalterable mien."

He stopped, as though whimsically amused at himself. Margaret was regarding him with parted lips; slowly over the lovely face wafted a breath of astonishment. But Jack was smiling at Violet.

"Pretty flighty small talk, I should say," he said, composedly.

"How high are they? The falls, I mean," she asked, to dissemble the foolish little jump in her pulse beat.

"About seventy feet, ma'am," replied Jack, for the same reason.

"Don't call me 'ma'am,' *please*. It makes me feel like a school teacher."

Margaret was startled by the flash of irrepressible mirth that shot between the two pairs of eyes. Kenneth was not startled; he was only disgusted. He had seen it many times before.

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"We'll have to hustle along," he said, abruptly.

But his interposition did not suffice to break up the incipient *tête-à-tête*. The reason for this lay hidden behind two roguish eyes that dwelt on Jack's face with a violet light in them. His sister tacitly insisted on riding ahead along the trail, beside the guide who said "ma'am" and had æsthetic theories about the proper use of English. Kenneth could see Violet's piquant profile intent on the non-committal, almost averted face of Jack Day. She was rattling along blithely, heedless that Jack replied only in studiously polite monosyllables. Kenneth could have shaken her. He could see that their knees often brushed each other in the narrow trail. In short, it was much pleasanter to ride beside Margaret and listen to her winning, low-toned prattle. It had color and feeling in it. . . . And Kenneth forgot. He delighted in that voice so much that anything it said was accordingly magical, beautiful. What did it matter that Margaret was merely recounting a time in her childhood when the artist Bierstadt had visited her father? It was pleasant to look upon the same cliffs, and upon the same whispering sea of aspens below that another pair of blue eyes sparkled upon. Margaret was pointing out the glorious blend of color and half-filmed light down Trevett that Bierstadt had said he would rather be able to reproduce than win the Battle of Waterloo. What did it matter? A strand of her hair, gilded in the sun and caressed by the dying breeze, brushed to and fro across a temple like snow. He wanted to kiss that sunny lock and put it back.

But—what was that? They were passing beneath an arbor, a regular grotto of shivering foliage, so that the moist sand pressed by the horses' feet was checkered with a shifting mottle of sunlight. And—Jack was actually talking. A jealous pin prick somewhere in Kenneth's consciousness; entirely without volition he spurred up nearer to catch the bearing of their remarks.

"No." Jack's words were clear-cut and cold. "You

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are *Miss Spenser*. My name is *Day*. It is absolutely imposs—" He broke off upon noticing that Margaret was within hearing. The eyes that had been looking Violet full in the face with utter impersonality while he spoke to her lit with amused desperation as they fell on the others. Distant inquiry alone predominated in his speech when he went on, with something entirely different from what he had expected to say.

"You asked me how circus horses are trained?"

Violet had asked nothing of the kind; but she merely smiled mischievously, as she made sure the others could hear what she replied.

"No. I merely wondered what *you* were before you became a cow-boy, a—a horse-wrangler, is that it? You were not always a cow-herder, I know."

The man's face burned. The three pairs of eyes were focused upon that wave of swarthy color under the bronze, each interpreting it in a different way, each curious from a different angle of reason to see what would be his answer. Margaret was surprised to find not a trace of embarrassment in the even words of reply; the man's chin was merely raised a trifle, face hard, eyes cold upon his interlocutor.

"No," he said, "you're quite right. I wasn't always a cow-puncher. Once upon a time I worked in a livery stable."

"A livery stable? How interesting!" Violet was acid sweetness itself. "I have been wondering where you learned such a graceful seat, such a—"

"Glorious and lucrative trade?" Jack had at length decided to enjoy the situation. A glimmer of fun leaped into his old-young eyes, so that Violet saw the same clean, all-boy soul in them she had known from the cradle; but bitterness withal.

"Exactly." She did not say more because something was in her throat, stifling her, something was in her eyes blinding her. But Jack's attention was elsewhere. He

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was rolling a cigarette, one knee flung lazily over the horn.

"Well, you see, it was this way, ma'am," he continued, his lips curling semi-humorously. "They used to auction off blooded stock, and I topped the horses to show off their paces. One, two—one, two—walk, trot, single-foot, pace, rack, canter, gallop. Very simple, I'm sure. If I hadn't had a rudimentary notion of how the thing was done—hadn't stayed with my mount—why, the animal wouldn't have commanded more than the market price of pig on the hoof."

"I see," commented Violet, struggling to keep the alternate tears and anger that circled with every contraction of her heart from showing in her face. Her mouth quivered the least bit.

Jack nodded satirically, and licked the edges of paper.

"So, consequently I might have gone minus my job. I have to ride to live, so I live to ride."

Violet twitched the sleeve of the blue flannel shirt in desperation. He looked around into a flushed face that frowned and smiled at the same time, and had something deep in the eyes that scolded him, cried out for him as across a void of tears; reflected a tiny image of him with a thrill of pure joy; seemed to beseech; was humble, proud, and questioning, all at once. An expression! That is all. . . . His horse thrust along under him, his hand raised to the cigarette. And it passed. He looked away, afraid. A stern aggression of reckless humor stirred him. After all, what did he care? Those eyes were purple abysses of deceit, treachery. They meant nothing. He did not care if they did. In utter abandon and recklessness he threw back his head and laughed. Margaret laughed, too, as at a bit of inimitable pantomime. Violet, thought she, is surely unconventional—but the mobile face and mind of her!

"What shall I do with you, sir?" cried Jack's tormentor,

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smilingly now. "Don't you know that there's nothing more horrid than being secretive?"

"Oh, Violet, what a tenderfoot you are!" laughed Margaret. "Don't you know the unwritten, unbreakable code of the West?"

"What is that?" inquired Jack, sudden interest in the level eyes on this other girl.

"Don't *you* know it, Mr. Day! Well, perhaps we must change it to suit the occasion. How will 'Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies' do, now?"

"A bit stringent." Jack shook his head, but looked quiet approval and comradeship into the lawmaker's sunny glance. He turned to Violet in mock deprecation. "Pardon me, Miss Spenser, I am not at all secretive. Behold me laying bare all the horrors of an opaque and mysterious past. Pluto looks on and shudders."

"You think that it isn't *comme il faut* for a girl to be inquisitive—not even curious?" Violet, polite anxiety, joined to ostentatious indifference.

"I may have had some such fallacious idea once. Not now."

"Do they teach the specious science of neatly turned but insincere flattery—in a livery stable?"

"Not as part of the regular undergraduate course. That must be acquired afterward. One must have a bachelor's degree in *écurie*. Then, I believe, there is a thesis required, and other red tape."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, ma'am. It is even considered a great drawback to a man who has been so misguided as to reverse the courses of study. One must be sincere in a stable. The horses won't stand for insincerity. Neither will the boss."

"But the customers? You don't mean to say that a horse-trader *par excellence* need proffer them the same pellucid brand of honesty—the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth? Marvelous!"

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"Perhaps you are right," smiled the young man, tossing his smoldering match at a chipmunk nimbly scuttling into the underbrush. "But then, you see, that is in a very undeveloped phase of civilization. The truth is still a standard there."

"It must have been a positively millennial establishment—that of yours. I'm really pining to see it. Was there a tanbark ring in connection with it? Pretty girls, perhaps, who came to take lessons from your Royal Highness."

"Young ladies came for riding instruction; but I'm not a connoisseur of beauty. The types are too distracting. I really didn't notice, ma'am."

"How retiring! But weren't they—interesting?"

"Indeed, I can't say. Shall I give you references?"

"What a Czar of the ring you must have been! What a Chesterfield of the stalls and stirrups! What an exclusive young groom! I should have been enchanted to have gone there and taken lessons from you."

"Is it possible! Why?"

"Just so I might have snubbed you, and ordered you around, and never seemed to have an inkling that you were anything else than mechanism wearing spurs."

"It would have been a great pleasure—"

"Oh no, it wouldn't! I'd have taken care of that. . . . What time is it?" she asked, abruptly.

Jack put his hand to his fob instinctively, then drew it away. He looked at the sun.

"About eleven-forty," he replied, showing his strong teeth in pleasant comprehension of her purpose.

"I don't have much faith in your romantic way of telling the time," retorted Violet, annoyed. "Will you let me see the large, old-fashioned watch you kept looking at while you were so fussed a moment ago?"

"I'm afraid it has stopped."

"What was the wording of the inscription I caught a glimpse of inside the case?"

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"I don't just recollect. It is an ancient turnip, of no particular value. The lettering is very indistinct—nothing of any significance."

"Something about the Revolutionary War?"

"Perhaps."

"Who bequeathed it to you?"

"Nobody. I paid—five bucks for it."

"And where, pray?"

"At my uncle's."

"Your—?"

"At a pawnshop, Miss Spenser."

"When you were a riding-instructor, I presume."

"Yes. In 'Frisco," he defied.

"That inscription doesn't happen to say that the watch was presented in recognition of distinguished services as an officer in the Continental Army—to—to—John Randolph—"

Such a stern chill was in the eyes bent upon Violet that she recoiled as before the baring of steel.

"Your pardon?" he said evenly, inclining his head ever so slightly, ever so significantly toward Margaret, his cool gaze never shifting from Violet's face.

She laughed, a shaky little laugh; but her audacity returned immediately.

"Indeed," she mocked, "we are under obligation to you for some very fascinating sidelights on business and diplomacy. *Yours* has been a remarkable career. Working in a livery stable, you learned candor through the ethics of horse-traders; you acquired the habit of delicately shaded flattery from the animals themselves. Because it was necessary to your domestic economy that you continue to live, and because you had never learned to ride, you were engaged to show off mettlesome steeds before customers. You became a connoisseur of antique jewelry in pawnshops. The rich and beautiful maidens whom you taught to ride you treated with haughty condescension, and never even did them the honor of noticing

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the color of their eyes. You cannot remember the inscription in a watch that you have looked at every hour for years, and yet you quote *ad libitum* from Byron to illustrate some passing bent of your fancy!"

Her laugh was a note strained as she pricked her horse to a wholly unnecessary canter up the steep grade.

The Blennerhassett Mine, in a lower twist of upper Trevett, was one of the largest mines in the state. The long east slope, upon which the tremendous gray dump and the massive bins and upper works protruded like an aching excrescence, was bristling with the nakedness of hundreds of thousands of stumps, where a forest primeval had passed away to do ignominious duty underground in miles of drifts and obscure stopes. The three visitors felt this immensity while they stood in the large engine-room, full of the whirl of high-arched electric motors upon the belts of thrusting air-compressors, of the hiss of steam, and of the constant grinding roar of the gigantic double electric hoist.

Jack was in consultation with a man in greasy overalls and a black-vizored cap, who was cleaning his hands on a scrap of waste; he had forgotten to do so before he had shaken hands warmly with Jack.

"So you ain't lookin' for a job, Jack?"—glancing curiously at the two girls and suddenly remembering his grimy face. "Oh, sure, we can fix you up, even if the boss is down the hole." He disappeared briefly through a door of very greasy panels, and came back with four rubber coats over his arm and a like number of black waterproof hats. Jack, in the fashion of the mines, introduced him all around as Emery, the second engineer. Emery helped everybody on with the coats, his teeth gleaming a pleased embarrassment from his smudged face. Then, as though he had forgotten something, he doubtfully suggested boots.

"We're not going in that ugly bog of an eleventh level,"

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said Jack. "There's nothing there to show but water, and you know it, you old pirate."

The other laughed and clapped Jack on the back, for once at his ease.

"Why, Jeff," resumed Jack, in a pseudo-injured tone, "you must think I'm as green as that fresh tenderfoot who stopped over with the boss last year. Remember him?"

"Sure," grinned Emery. "I reckon he plumb killed me, var-yous times. Selden writes up from the smelter for more galena—for a flux, I'm thinkin'. The tenderfoot was a-settin' in the office.

"Gal Ena?" sezze. 'Who's that?'

"The old man gawps at him and nigh loses his store teeth. Tenderfoot looks highly 'sulted, then cunnin' and knowin'.

"Well," sezze, 'I won't give you away, Uncle, but dad-hat it, when you write, please—'

"*Give her my love,*" chorused Jack and the engineer, grinning at each other like mirthful Teddy Bears. Jeff squared away and made a pass at his gleeful comrade; then, recollecting the rest of his audience, retired abruptly behind a compressor and began unscrewing an oil-cup.

Jack couldn't, and, for a wonder, neither could Kenneth, refrain from a smile at the figures the girls presented while they were waiting in the dim heights of the head-house for the cage to appear. Both coats were much too large; the girls were lost in them. Margaret looked about her with a cool observation that was distracting in its rosy contrast with the disreputable old hat and the bulging hollows of the rubber coat. Violet peered at the yawning pit with the cables quivering in it, her eyes dark, wisps of amber hair blowing about a flushed face; then she looked instinctively at Jack carrying the smoking, tin-shaded lamp. She was afraid; and it was the first time she had almost forgotten. And then, like a wraith, appeared the steel-framed box of the cage. Jack drew aside

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the bar, and a trammer pulled out the ponderous loaded car.

"All aboard," prompted Jack; and Kenneth and the two girls stepped on. Violet trembled visibly as she watched Jack outside hauling away at the bell cord: the three-two (man lower) signal.

"You're all right," he encouraged, joining them. He had almost said "kid," and thanked his stars he hadn't. Violet clutched her brother's sleeve as they sank swiftly.

"This is as good as an express elevator," observed Kenneth, under the dull red of the torches. He certainly had been decidedly brief and bromidic all morning. Margaret asked him if his arm ached after the long ride; he denied, then thinking that was a perfectly good reason for his awkward silences, admitted it did—some. The girl looked worried.

"Oh, he's a hero," thought Jack, scornfully. "Garry, I really believe she thinks he broke his arm saving *her*!"

That was a memorable day for the girls. Bowing beneath top-sets in long drifts, flattening against the dripping timbers out of the way of trammers with rumbling cars, hearing the voice of their cicerone as in a dream telling them of wonderful gold assays and sulphides of silver and lead that made it pay to haul down Levering Pass, fourteen miles to a railroad. Several times they clambered along untimbered stopes to where a machine drill fulminated an ear-splitting racket at the rocks. The air-drill man would invariably hold an intent, set face upon his task, thinking it was the boss with some stockholders. Jack would say in an offhand way, "Hello, Tom," or "Johnny," or "Bill," and there would be an instant metamorphosis. The miner would always silence the whizzing uproar, turn a pleased, porphyry-spattered countenance, and would discourse earnestly with Kenneth on the vagaries of the vein, as Jack's friend, and as such *his* friend. It was an advance even on the *camaraderie* of labor. Violet noticed it; why the sight made her feel

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as if she wanted to cry again, why it made her feel humble and petty and mean she could not explain, but it did. Of a truth, everybody loved Jack, to the very dogs and horses, and *men*.

At last the glimpse into the dark wonderland was over. They were mounting swiftly in the cage along the smooth guides when a momentary compression of the air from a blast in a level they were passing blew the torches out. In the darkness Jack felt his arm hugged tight in two others that trembled. A warm breath tingled on his ear, and a whisper that was almost lost in the "Sh-h-h!" of the guides.

"Jack!"

In it was not fear, but love, and humility, and yearning for forgiveness.

Jack felt his own arms leap to clasp her; but a bitter vision of the same tableau on a Washington's Birthday night, four years past, poisoned him. He held them back savagely and turned aside.

XIII

AFTERMATH

Thanks, for the fiend best knows
Whether woman or man be the worse.
I will bury myself in myself,
And the Devil may pipe to his own.
—Tennyson.

JACK rose moodily from the oilcloth table and swung out of the cook-house. With his head down he slouched purposelessly over to the bench in front of the bunk-house, and slumped down there upon the small of his back, without thought of an after-supper pipe. He was the first to leave the table; hence he was in solitude for several minutes. There was a wonderful Sangre de Cristo sunset smiling with mantling cheek at him through the notch of Trevett; but its splendor was drowned in a dumb blackness before the young man's vision, in his very soul. His whole world was black—and not a star-beam.

Other members of the Sleeping Seven staff strolled over, cropful, content, and dawdled beside him. These could tell at a glance that he wished to be let alone, and with true kindness respected his mood. Some of the men started the evening game of quoits.

"Hey, Jack, come over hyah!"

"Don't mind the fool, Jack. I want you to help me ream *this* devil."

"Thanks, boys," replied Jack, a wan smile in his eyes, "but I—I guess my horseshoe arm has a charley-horse to-night."

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Knowing him, they did not urge him. The game became exciting, a real championship affair between Pete Tabary, Turp Entine, and Desperate Scotty. One by one the audience on the bench drifted over nearer, to see inches, fractions of them, and share in the fire of competition. A long, lithe figure extricated itself from the throng presently, and lounged beside Jack, rolling a cigarette. Several others retired from the game to vague ceremonial in the bunk-house. There was to be a dance at the Crinkly Q, ten miles down the valley; and those favored were donning their "soft togs"—their nearest approach to full-dress regalia.

"What's the grouch, pardner?" urged Bum McMillan, his hand on the silent one's knee.

Jack's lips curved, but some dim world of pain still swam in his eyes.

"Grouch? I guess I was just thinking."

"Cut it. The devil's dead. What's the use? The asylums are full of the results of—thinking. Cheer up, m' son; pay-day's coming!"

Jack was silent still. Bum mused at the rugged face, and his dark eyes softened furtively at something graven around Jack's mouth.

"Come, come, pard! Look at that Turner flaunting out before you over there. . . . Come to recollect, I've never seen you like this before. You're a regular dead man. Jack, I—I don't like to see you *think*. I don't like to do it myself, I guess; possibly the reason." A flash of cheerful banter lighted up the dark face. "Now, when I think—"

"Here's what I'm thinking, Bum," replied Jack, in an expressionless voice, turning his eyes, with a hard flicker in them, upon the other. "I'm thinking of going before the wind again. For a starter, I'm picturing the nearest place I can go to and get blind, shuddering, dead drunk."

"Ah!"

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"Yes. Stewed to the gills. Not plain roaring tipsy. *Drunk*—beastly, dead drunk."

"But—Jack, I've never seen you touch a drop! I don't think you ever have—"

"No? Better late than never, then. Perhaps I never have; perhaps I hate the poison; perhaps—"

"There are things you want to—forget?"

"No," grimly, "obliterate, annihilate—"

"Don't do it, boy. I've tried to—to disintegrate memory that way. It's infinitely more painful afterward. The morning after it builds itself up like a Chinese puzzle. You see every detail as you never saw it before. And you go and get drunk again, and—"

"I'll do that!" laughed Jack, mirthlessly. "I'll do that! *Something* will disintegrate."

"Oh, Jack—"

Jack made a silencing gesture.

"Bum, do you see those cottonwoods down by the creek?" irrelevantly.

"Yes," wonderingly.

"The top branches are waving, weaving about, shivering, always, aren't they?"

"Yes."

"And the lower ones are still—always—still as death."

"I've got you."

"No, you haven't. There is the difference between the higher and lower organism expressed as clearly as Nature can do it. And she is a mistress of logic—and all that is illogical."

"No, I was off a rod. What is the difference?"

"In the relative capacity for—suffering. The higher you go the more sensitive—"

"And you are paying for being a top branch, pardner. I see."

"No," added Jack, wearily, "I think I have more than paid. I'm going to even up accounts now, and come to a new balance—lower down."


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"Jack—don't. It's as I say. This is not like you. I don't know what your trouble is, but this is not like you. You have always been— Don't take your cue from me. I'm a rotter—never will be any good. You've carried me home from many a wretched spree; and I've thanked you for it. I've pledged you for months. Remember what *I* looked like, wallowing in the sawdust of some bar-room floor or crawling out in the morning from some dive. Oh, Jack, be a man. You've always been. Be a—"

"Thanks for your testimonial of sobriety, Bum. It 'll be waste paper to-night."

He rose and strode back into the bunk-house.

"Jack!"

Within was chaos. Have we not said the favored members of the  were getting into their "soft togs"? In all phases of toilette, from empyrean to grand, the boys were scrambling in profane haste for precedence at the mirror—a ragged, bullet-spangled slice looted from behind some bar with a racy, medieval history. They were falling over various footwear and their own feet. Frequent were cries of:

"Rouse mit 'em! Can't you see I'm—"

"Roll off o' my coat, you blatt-eyed yop! Who—"

"Lock who's here! Weenix Adonix! Holy mackerel, Tom, you ain't the only—"

"Give *one* more fellow a squint at that glass to-night, Tom—"

"Your beard's growin' twicet faster 'n you can shave it off at that rate."

Tom Carter—who was the gay Lothario of the Sangre de Cristo—squire of dames, and favored and trusted by all the mothers as well as daughters of the parkland, even as Bum McMillan was the Don Juan who affrighted the former and fascinated all the latter—Tom turned his innocent blue eyes and belathered face placidly on the whiskered proletariat.

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"Gee," he commented, stropping his razor with a nicety which was the last straw of exasperation to his pleading comrades, "you fellers is a vain lot! 'F I'd a-knowed this was to be a beauty show to-night I'd 'a' staid to home. I ain't got a chance competin' with—"

His leisurely eye lit on Desperate Scotty, at last grips with a necktie that rivaled the hues of a rainbow—or Scotty's face; for the poor fellow was slowly strangling himself to death. Purple, green, violet, and shiny with soap. Tom scraped a tentative swath across his own ruddy cheek, and his glance reverted to Scotty. The latter, in desperation over his obdurate cravat, had thrust his glistening phiz over Tom's shoulder, and his not over-handsome lineaments were writhing in a contorted frenzy of aspiration with that necktie. Scotty's apparition in the cracked mirror was too much for Tom; it sent cold shudders zigzagging up and down his spine. Tom's own mouth was very much on one side in an attempt to shave the other hemisphere of his face; but he could not but gag at the reflected hobgoblin. He turned, stared, gesticulated.

"Wow! Forty thousand coyotes! Holy Hetty, Scotty, stop it! You look like Me-fist-top-heels in blue thunder!"

Tom's optical delicacy was his undoing. Taken unawares by the waiting-list, Turp Entine got the razor; Scotty blandly assumed the mirror; three grinning bandits sat on Tom and strapped him hand and foot with his own bandanna and suspenders. Deposited raving in his bunk, he passed through the stage of profanity into one of expostulation, complaint, and, finally—breathing a sigh—to philosophy. That last, with Tom, was a synonym for slumber; the lather dried on his face while he drifted away with a snore over beds of roses.

Jack, fumbling with his war bag under his bunk, scarcely noted the *lèse majesté*. Such incident was too common at the Sleeping Seven for comment. Scotty, the necktie now a masterpiece, ventured to pause beside

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Jack, wiping his perspiring brow. The peaceful one begged and besought Jack to come along with the gang: the thing 'ud be a frost if he didn't.

"Jack," he inquired, shyly, after a pause, "you ain't off your feed, are you?"

"Ain't you coming to the Q, Saturday?" pleaded one who overheard, with visible anxiety.

"That little Twining beauty 'll be plumb cold on this layout if you don't show up," commented Turp, to his face in the mirror. "It's croolty t' go onct, hypnotize a lady with your fiery figgers o' speech, and then never re-turn."

"Not this time, boys," replied Jack to every query, patiently unobtrusive. He thrust the war bag back in its place.

"How 'bout Bum?"

"Oh, cheroots!" from one arrayed like Solomon in all his glory, at present occupied with the exact mathematical indentation of a new Stetson. "Bum 'ud break up the dance. They're wise to him. Too much of this Lochinvar stuff with Ella Blaine last time."

"I wonder," mused Turp to his image, "why a good fellow like Jack always hands the girls such an off gaff. It seems to make a hit. I got a hunch I'll try it on."

"It ain't natchrul," excepted Scotty.

Turp lowered at him.

"What ain't natural?" he questioned, darkly, flourishing the razor. "For me to make a hit—say?"

"Wait a minute," from Scotty, backing away. "I mean to be so all-fired distant an'—an' dis-tin-gu-ee."

"I got you." Turp was placated.

"Say, boys," suggested the *distingué* subject, who had been ruminating over Carter's placid slumbers, "you don't intend to leave Tom here, do you? You'd blast the ball."

"Nope," growled Turp, "he's harmless. But him and

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a mirror is positive devilish. Set him loose, Jack, will you?"

Jack complied, with a stroke of the Carter pompadour to awaken him.

"Arise, my sweet," he crooned. "Arise and part the dewy boughs, if thou 'dst be Queen of Beauty this starry night."

Bum's dark face was a mask of thought and dim reverie; his long limbs canted along the bench oblivious of the jolly riot within.

Jack reappeared, smiling, and examining a long Colt's .45.

"Jack," whispered his friend, "it's a *man* who—"

"Yes, Bum, m' son," Jack rejoined, cheerfully, "I've had my place in the cast as a *man*—and a pitiful one, 'tis true. Turn about's fair play. I intend to enact a *beast* epic to-night—and next night—and—"

"Jack, come out of it! You—"

"That's the point, my friend. *Come out of it!* I'm going to come out of it. If, after a full course of treatment, external and internal, of liquid fire, my memory isn't of the same quality and distinctness as that of a hog in a pool of swill, why—"

He gazed at the sinister bluish glint in his hands and fondled it tenderly.

He thrust the revolver into his pocket and laughed. It was the bitterest mirth McMillan had ever heard. He felt his cheeks pale under the reckless glitter of Jack's eyes—the eyes of a blue-eyed boy—with deep grooves of pain on each side of a quizzical mouth. Jack gripped his astonished hand, pressed his shoulder, and was off toward the foreman's house, his hands in his pockets under the chaps, whistling a lively air from the ballet music of "Faust."

Jack knocked and entered the foreman's sanctum. Under the green nimbus of a student lamp, Sandy Hallo-

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well was doggedly prodding at columns of figures in a huge ledger. The man's upper lip bulged with his absorption; but as he peered over his horn-rimmed spectacles his dour Scotch face wreathed in welcome.

"Aweel, how is it wi' ye, Jack Day?"

"Evening to you, Sandy," cried Jack, in cheerful return. "I've come for my time."

Sandy started, pretended not to hear, and prodded drearily on with the pen; but he could not keep the quick wave of concern out of his bushy face.

"Were na the young ladies bonny? Miss Margaret speaks verra—quite weel of ye, sir. And Miss Spenser—"

"They were very nice, Sandy. Miss Mason is the kindest young woman I've met. But I've come—"

"It isna that ye dinna wiss to gang along wi' them nae more, Jack?" anxiously.

"No, Sandy, not that," with absolute truth from the bottom of his heart.

"Ye ken why I sent ye, lad? Ye—ye're *different*, somehow, frae—"

"No," said Jack, quietly, "I'm not. I'm a wanderer and a ne'er-do-well; and I've come for my time."

Sandy scanned him, a shadow on his brow.

"Ye wrang y'rsel', my laddie. Ye wrang y'rsel'. There never was a straughter— And y'r laugh—'tis guid to hear aboot the bunk-house and the pens."

Jack smiled, the sweetness of it tinged with the melancholy that had sunk upon his soul at the end of that, alas, all too short day.

"The wanderlust, Sandy. You've been as good as gold to me. But I'm saddling the little mare, and we drift together—to-night."

A knock on the door. A man entered with a clank of spur irons.

"I want my time, too, Sandy," he announced, quietly, standing beside Jack and putting a hand upon his shoulder.

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"Have ye the wanderlust, too, McMillan?" cried the Scotchman, testily.

"Call it that," agreed the handsome, saturnine fellow.

Jack turned to Bum with remonstrance on his lips.

"Be still," said the other, roughly. "You can't keep your own disease from spreading."

Sandy's eyes were on Jack Day's face. He saw something hard and reckless in the rugged lines of it, but he saw it soften under the manly defiance of McMillan's look. Jack stumbled into shamed speech.

"But *you* needn't—you *can't*—"

"D—n you!" thundered Bum, in an explosion of passion. "Shut up, will you? Are you the little king of my comings and goings? Can you keep me from sailing out and making as big a fool of myself as you are going to do? Not by a d—n sight! Hallowell, give me my time."

Sandy counted out a sheaf of new bills after a glance at his books, and Bum slouched out of the room without another word, tucking them in a trousers pocket. Jack stared at the blank panels of the door, a film before his eyes. Sandy was looking at him, mistily.

"Jack, mon," he said, clearing his throat, "here's y'r time, and a month advance. I ken the braw young bluid. The young lads irk wi' the cooping on a quiet heather." Then, cheerily: "Have y'r fling, my laddie. Come back when y'r spirit is a-keepin' its bounds. It would be a gr-rit blow to—to the Missis—and to—to the wee lads and lassies back yon in dozy land—na' to see y'r bonny, sunny face nae mair. Tak it, and gae. I'm nought but ane auld fool the mair."

Jack was touched by the honest expression of esteem, and by the assumed irritation to cover it. But the black chasm yawned again, and he welcomed it. He refused the advance pay, but thanked Sandy warmly, crushing his hand in farewell.

"I may be back soon," and strode out of the door. Sandy heard the lilting, reckless, diabolical air from

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"Faust" recommence outside and merge in distance. He glanced at the columns of figures, and removed his spectacles to wipe off a haze—something; still he could not see through them.

"Aye, an auld fool!" he grumbled to the wise old collie, whose intent muzzle was pointed at the door, shaggy ears erect. The dog turned and looked at the Scotchman as only a collie can.

"Aye, and ye're an auld fool, too, d' ye mind?"

And so it happened that, in Silver Cord, many miles away, and with grim snow mountains in between, two lathered, exhausted horses nodded before a white-lighted building at two o'clock of the following morning. From within jarred the last agonies of a piano of evil life which was being mauled to death for its sins; and from somewhere in the rear a shuffle of heavy feet which caused the front windows of the flimsy structure to rattle in delayed *tempo*, like villainous castanets. At intervals a violin would squeak in hysterical, elfish accentuation of the tinkling discord, which was filled by the bourdon of men's voices and punctuated occasionally by the waufish scream of a woman.

The night dragged through. The two horses still stood there, waiting, dumbly waiting in uncomplaining patience, before that whited hell with the false front beginning to reveal the harsh cruelty of its lines in the gray dawn. If horses could read, they would have cursed the legend in silhouette upon those abandoned windows; but they cannot, so the satire of the title was lost on them: *AL'S HEALTH OFFICE*.

The night dragged through. Every time a solitary figure emerged from the door, bringing a breath of sodden flame with him, and reeled away along the board sidewalk, one of the two horses raised its head, with ears pointed wistfully, only to droop back in patient acceptance of fate.

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The night dragged through. The light of day whitened pitilessly; a few flaunting, painted creatures slipped out of the door and were gone. No one of the score who had left before went unaccompanied. At last the beat of feet died away, and the fevered jangling of the piano with it. The dawn swam through the reeking interior air and drowned the electricity. That dawn disclosed the sweat-streaked, dragged withers of the two horses and the human despond in the eyes of Sandy, fixed on the door.

A man in a dirty white apron and with frowsled black hair came out presently with a broom, and proceeded to sweep the remnants of broken bottles and brown reek from the board walk. Sandy watched him. Then she methodically began to paw the earth, her soft eyes still on him, plaintively intent. The man kept on sweeping. After a while she raised her front hoof and beat insistently on the boards. The man turned his bearded face and sleepless eyes on her in sullen interrogation, and she ceased, but still wearing that delicate air of anxiety and question. He came to parade rest on the handle of the broom. They gazed at each other.

"Wot's eatin' *you*?" he growled, and wheeled again to his sweeping. Then he shuffled back inside.

An hour of desolation. Who knows what agony of suspense a beast endures? A beast with a heart as capable of the divine gift (or punishment) of love as any human being. Who knows? The pony's head drooped lower and lower. Ah, Master, all the God I know, hast thou forsaken me? There was a pistol shot crashing in the dark hours. Ah, Master, hast thou plunged across the black chasm whither I cannot follow thee?

A girl opened the front door of the Mason house up Trevett and stole out down the steps into the fragrant dawn, where a robin was throstrling his cheery matin in the aspens, with the roaring whisper of the falls for dia-

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pason. She was all in white, and her amber hair flowed in sun-kissed waves below her waist, tempting the fainting breeze to do likewise. And she was very lovely, dreaming along through the grasses, forgetful of the comb in her hand, her wide eyes lit with an interior light.

She sank half-reclining on the mossy bank—which glitters with the dew from the falls whenever the wind blows down Trevett—and gazed at the flicker of the Iris in the creamy pillar as though she would paint it forever on her own retina. Presently she began to comb out her hair, with half-tilts of her small head that were exquisite revelations of grace in every movement. And she breathed a little song there, all by herself, to the grandeur of the falls. Once she flung down the comb, content merely to gaze.

"I have found him," she murmured. "I have found him, and he loves me, though his eyes are cold. They were cold, but I saw fear there—fear to meet the speech of mine. He loves me still—and is afraid he *will* love me."

She laughed out joyously, and flung back her beautiful head. And then became grave, with a sweet, meditative gravity, bending her face to the long grasses. A few tiny flowers smiled at her from their fragrant bed, and she smiled back, a rose gleam tingeing her cheek. Star-flowers, bluebells, columbines, and all ye nameless ones! And—violets; her lips curved tenderly. She plucked a dozen of her name flower, and tossed them one by one into the mist of Iris.

"Jack!" she whispered, kissing every one before she cast it. "Jack, I'm calling you, and you must hear me. Come and let me beg forgiveness. Come and let me make you afraid. Come and let me tease—and love you! Come—and keep me near you always."

A man thrust out of the battered doors, raising a hand to his forehead. He reeled against the wall and clung

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there dizzily. A brusque clatter of iron-shod hoofs on the board sidewalk, a delighted whinny, and a head nuzzling into his breast. Some of the cloud drifted away from his sodden vision, some of the crackling of flame from his brain; and he looked down unsteadily at that humble, worshiping head with the soft eyes. He flung his arm around the arch of her neck and caressed the velvet nose. She nickered tremorously under his touch.

"You poor little devil!" he murmured, compassionately. "I'm your tin deity, am I, Sandy horse? Don't you see how the tin is dented and smeared?" His voice sank in shame. "And I left you, little chum, to shiver through the cold night, while I— I don't deserve to—I ain't agwine to do it no more, sweetheart." The man hugged her tight. "I have no right to make *you* suffer."

He drew the trailing bridle up over her head, and, as an afterthought, loosened the cinches that had been so cruelly tight all through the night. Then he clung giddily to the saddlehorn, unable to mount.

"Take me—somewhere, girlie. I'm not—"

The pair stumped off the sidewalk and up the single deserted street with its blind face of false fronts and barred windows. Perhaps a hundred yards they proceeded in this strange fashion, with Sandy pausing occasionally to look around at her master. At such times he would always bury his face against her shoulder, to smother the bleak explosions of hell fire behind his eyes, and to keep from falling. She would wait until he raised his head, and then she would plod on. They came to a house at the end of the street, set back in a grove of cottonwood and surrounded by a rustic fence in the natural bark. It was dim and green under the trees, and redolent of the breath of wild flowers. There was an iron pump inside to the right of the gate. Sandy stopped and looked around at Jack Day again, wistfully. It took a full moment for the significance of that iron thing with the long arm to percolate through the fiery embers of his consciousness.

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Finally he drew himself erect with a shudder. A qualm of nausea swam over him, and he clamped his jaws in a grim scorn of it.

"Just a minute, little one," he said to the horse, and gritted his teeth. Then he strode straight through the gate and over to the pump, head disdainfully erect; only his feet wavered a trifle as he set them down with unnecessary firmness. He leaned upon the iron handle and thrust vigorously upon the dry vacuum. In a moment out splashed the water in a cold, silvery stream, foaming into the bucket below. Jack made a movement as if to lift the bucket to his burning lips, then cursed himself, and bore it out brimming full to Sandy. She nodded and nickered, and plunged her muzzle in greedily, pumping up the contents until the bit rattled on the tin bottom and she nosed and whushed in vain. He brought her another and stroked her neck while she dallied with it. Then he returned inside and drank quarts of the icy stuff, only to plunge his whole head and face into what remained, repeatedly, until his scalp tingled with the cold and his face was glowing. When he wrung the water from his hair and wiped it from his face with a blue bandanna, his eyes were clear again and the dizziness was gone. Only his head ached abysmally.

"Ah!" he muttered, as he swung into the saddle to look for McMillan. "*The Chinese Puzzle!*"

Where he found Bum it serves no purpose to relate. Nor does it much advance matters to tell how Jack invaded the stable of the Silver Cord Hotel, how Sandy reveled in a morning *festa* of oats and received a tender rub-down at the hands of her repentant master.

Bum looked on cynically, from a perch upon the manger, not a trace of the night's debauch on his swarthy, handsome countenance. It was long use and habit, and a constitution of block bronze only, which showed forth in the hard-cut lines and devil-may-care eyes of that face. He whistled, and offered saturnine comment to Jack,

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bent over a slender, mud-caked fetlock. Beside him Sandy ground away at her oats, and he absently plaited a lock of her mane.

"I'm hungry," he vouchsafed at last, an interlude to "Pagliacci." Jack drew himself erect and passed a hand through his hair.

"You ingot of chrome steel!" he groaned. "There are a million imps in my head—all trying to get out at once."

"What did I tell you, Jack?" said Bum, suddenly grave.

"Yes," replied Jack, "you are the seventh son of seventy generations of seventh sons. It's there. It will take eons of liquid fire to—to obliterate it."

"It—?"

"The Chinese Puzzle."

"Jack," pleaded Bum, his arm around his friend, "come back to the Sleeping Seven with me."

"No," obstinately, "*you* go. You've no business with me. . . . Faugh, the stuff strangled me! I'm going where there's a sort that flows like water, tingles like a clear mineral spring, and makes a man walk telegraph wires. When you fall off, you—"

"Fall into a madhouse. Champagne! It—"

"It's all the same," smiled Jack. "I've decided I'm hungry, too."

"Look here, Jack—"

Jack flung off the arm with a silencing gesture.

"Oh, go to hell, then!" cried Bum. "Go to hell, straight." Then, in a lower key, "And take me with you."

He followed Jack out into the chill morning splendor, on a search for the nearest "ham and."

Their horses jogged along under them, side by side, the dust floating out from their wake across the noonday shimmer of a parkland less fair and wholesome than that in which the Sleeping Seven nestles. Afar in the gray

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distances dwindled a darker fluff of smoke where a freight crawled southward; and the mountains which formed the now distant barriers flared brazen, no longer the purples and pinks of the Sangre de Cristo. Down that sallow ribbon of road, between the alternate sagebrush and deep-green alfalfa, reared a dust cloud with a nucleus of white.

They approached it at the shuffling lope of catteliland, and drew aside presently to let the covered buckboard and white horses have the right of way in the narrow trail. It did not pass. A guttural exclamation and a broad, red face emerged from the canvas side curtains in front.

"'Lo, you, Zyack Day! *Mieze-geblasen*, where you been and where you go? I heffent you saw it iss t-two years *gegangen*!"

Jack wheeled on a ten-cent piece and gripped the ham-like hand thrust out at him.

"Claus Offenbach! It's great to see you."

The girl on the seat beside the old German held out a frank hand, bubbling into laughter which was very pleasant to hear. Jack drew off his hat and took that hand; she returned his grip like a man.

"You don't ride all the colts now, I take it, Miss Offenbach?"

Bum was gazing his admiration if Jack wasn't, and Jack hastened to make his friend known to father and daughter. But the daughter's eyes were on Jack.

"My name is Elsie, Master Jack. You—"

Jack looked into the young woman's face, a countenance blowsy with the health that is beauty, eyes blue as cornflowers and sparkling with the zest of living, a wealth of flaxen hair fluffing rebelliously from under the Stetson she wore.

"*Dein wangen sind blumenstraussen*," remarked Jack, in his most exasperating way. She knew none of her father's tongue, and *he* knew that.

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"Fräulein Elsa, *dein augen sind blau!*"

At the feigned astonishment in his voice and expression a rich blush flowed over the fair Teutonic face. Her father laughed rumblingly, which only added to her confusion.

"I don't know at all what you're talking about," she cried, in the purest English our polyglot land affords. "I'm suspicious of you already; but I'm very glad to see you."

She leaped out of the buckboard, a blonde Brunhilde, and caressed Sandy, who gave satisfactory evidences of recognition. Jack slumped in the saddle and talked with her father,—alfalfa and hogs, the yearling returns for the season, and where that rain accursed had hid itself; but Bum had eyes only for the rosy face that was so frank and seemed so boyish, the round figure that was all fullness and slenderness, and as lithe as a panther's.

"When are you coming back, Jack?" she asked, abruptly, looking up in his face from an impromptu arrangement of the pony's forelock. A quick inspiration leaped into his eyes as she questioned them. "There isn't anybody I like to talk to since you went away. Everybody chews tobacco and talks about hogs. I like to talk to *you*—about New York, and Paris—and—"

Jack smiled. Elsie blushed.

"Yes, sir,—about *myself*."

"You have an advantage over most people, Elsie. You *are* something to talk about. Have you broken any more colts, or fallen off of any more haystacks, or read any more Victor Hugo, or mastered any more of that divine ragtime that you boil eggs by? Have you—"

"I *did* finish that hair bridle we started to make together, Jack," unaffected wistfulness in her eyes. "You remember. You went away before you could use it once to—to Wyoming."

"And wound up in Alaska."

Man and girl, they met each other's eyes with com-

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radely reminiscence, as man to man. The girl's were sincere and straightforward, and not a whit unmaidenly. Her world was a small one, of men only, and solitude. Guile never entered Elsie's sphere, thought Jack, for woman was a stranger there; she was only herself, and had the rough chivalry of all about her. Why should she not artlessly leave those blue eyes open upon the wistfulness within them? Old Offenbach's regard on both of them had a touch of the same wish, reflected, as it were, but with a cognizance of something else.

"Zyack," he said, the guttural rich with persuasion, almost pleading, "I been trouble haffing mit de breaking, it iss two summers already. I needt you, young fellow. Dese cow people know noddings but broncos; dey didt not goot horses understand; dey kill, maul, ruin—yet. . . . Und iss dere not someone else which wants you? Eh, *mädchen?*"

Elsie was still questioning Jack with her eyes. A faint rose hovered in her cheeks.

"Yes," she said, simply.

"Elsie," said Jack, quickly, the fruit of his inspiration some time back, "how do you and Sandy like each other?"

The girl hugged the soft nose to her cheek for answer.

"Well, I can't come now. I have—business. And—where I'm going—I can't take the mare. I—may not be back—very soon; but—Elsie, would you care to keep Jack Day's Sandy for him?"

Elsie was delighted.

"Yes, yes!" she cried. "And then I shall see you all the sooner."

"Done!" he laughed, and swung to the ground with one motion. She put her hand lightly on the pommel and vaulted into the saddle, the cowboys' version of the rebel yell ringing clear and full from her lips. Horse and rider vanished in a swirl of dust, only to reappear in a moment, stopping short within two feet. She sat

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there, eyes sparkling down at Jack, hair flying, mantling with rich color, oblivious of the shapely apparition in a black stocking, the result of her hasty mounting, a disclosure of symmetry from ankle to knee.

"I'll ride her home, father," she cried, "and she shall be as fat and frisky as a pussy cat when Jack comes back."

The old German nodded, well pleased; Jack would be back, that was certain. The young man had slipped off his leather chaparreras, and tossed them into the buckboard.

"Ever wear 'em now, Elsie?" he asked.

"Lots," she returned, sparkling. "These things are so clumsy," indicating the blue skirt billowing under her in the saddle, "and your stirrups are too long."

"I'm going right over there to the railroad," explained Jack, in making his farewell, "so I sha'n't stop now, Claus."

Father and daughter gave him a hearty squeeze of the hand, and Elsie rode along the road beside him a short space, talking to him, her hand on his shoulder, man fashion. Bum interpolated something from the other side betimes. When she finally wheeled to go, Sandy, however, refused to budge from her tracks. The pony was looking around at her master reproachfully; cajoling and flattery from feminine lips did no good.

"Here, little chum, we understand these things," murmured Jack in the silken ears, rumpling her forelock for the last time. Sandy gave Jack to understand that she *didn't* understand, but that it was all right if he said so. As he hugged the pony's head in parting, some one rumpled his own mop of hair. It was Elsie. When she darted off with a laugh, he found he had her hat and she his. But it fitted him, so what was the difference?

"Will you take me round next time you call?" asked Bum, following the trim figure with his eyes. She gave a last wave of the stolen hat by way of good-by.

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"Which is—never," returned Jack, quietly.

Bum was still looking after her.

"Old man," he murmured, "isn't *that* better than—this—last night? A beautiful boy—and you are the fairy prince, as any fool may run and read. What an eye, and a flower garden is her face! What a—a leg—didn't you see? And of all this she knows nothing!"

Jack's eyes were on distance. Far in the shimmering sage swam something very different—a flushed face that frowned and smiled at the same time, had something deep in the eyes that scolded him, cried out for him as across a void of tears, reflected a tiny image of him with a thrill of pure joy, love, and question—and meant—nothing. Bum looked down at him as they scuffed along in the dust, side by side. With an expression very similar to a curse, Jack was trying to thrust something like an invisible veil from before his eyes.

"Confound the luck!" Bum ejaculated, suddenly. "Why didn't *I* leave Two Spot to be 'cared for' at Dreamland Ranch, also?"

"The idea!" cried Jack, in quick earnest. "You go back, Bum. Old Offenbach will—"

"Will *you* come, Jack?"

"No. I—I have business. It's you must leave off being an utter fool. *No.*"

"Two fools," corrected Bum, cheerfully. "Hop up behind. I'll sell the little mucker in La Perdita yonder. We've always hated each other. He's been laying for me with that nasty front foot ever since I roped him first; but this 'll fox him. Hop up! Where thou goest, Gaius, go I also; Knights Templar on one horse in poverty, perversity, and general pugnacity!"

XIV

AMATEUR SOCIOLOGY

I am part of all that I have met.—*Tennyson.*

THERE is a quaint branch road in Norway over which Americans take a round-trip passage just to be able to relate the exploit. On the tables it reads: "*Trondhjem till Hell; Hell till Trondhjem.*" It is through beautiful scenery. And Hell is a lovely mountain hamlet, indeed *fair*.

The Devil's express is perhaps as harmless, and much fuller of boyish mischief and folly than a trainload of joking tourists on the Norwegian railroad. *So far.* And the young simpleton who imagines his life and dreams are blasted forever, who carries with him that sinister blue Colt's with its six potential chambers, is as much a figure for comedy as Bottom with the ass's ears in the immortal "*Midsummer Night's Dream.*" And as futile. But two weeks have passed away. Where shall we find him now?

He sits at a round table in the rear of a palatial temple of Dipsomania, a palace of glittering mirrors, gleam of brass rails, sheen of polished mahogany and oak. His face is reflected in the gloss of the table in front of him. It is haggard, sleepless, pale with the pallor of a fish's belly; the eyes are bloodshot and seem glazed. He does not see the kaleidoscope of mazy figures in the large arcade in the rear, although he sits there as before a stage; and it is much the same. There is more flaunting folly, display of human weakness, and smoldering of evil passions

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in that white-lighted carnival than the greatest playwright has ever been able to squeeze upon any stage. Alone at that table he sees a nameless something along the brazen highlight of the bass horn in the orchestra: a pair of eyes, perhaps; mayhap the leer of a fiend. . . . That orchestra is playing a dreamy waltz of Strauss's, and playing it exquisitely; the highest paid band in the state. Why should the Devil have all the good tunes as well as all the fun? It would be useless to ask the sodden figure at the table to philosophize on that or any other question; there are a dozen empty champagne bottles in a bucket beside his chair and rolling about the floor at his feet.

The music ceases, and the noisy exodus from the dance floor begins, to tables and dim corners. Some of these gallants lead their "ladies" up to the bar, where they order gin rickeys for two, and the "lady" tosses off the gin neat, with a flicker of the eyelid and a flourish. They lean on the bar together, and the women see themselves in the great mirrors. With narrowed lashes they blow cigarette smoke at their rouged likenesses. And at that table sits the solitary figure, an expression of sick disgust in the eyes fixed on distance.

Bum McMillan, his dark face lit with the excitement of a tilt on the floor, strides up to the table. Bum is the same; the last two weeks have only been a grand frolic to him. It is his element; the swarthy countenance is as handsome and debonnaire as ever. But as his eyes light on the sodden figure with its elbows on the table an expression of anxiety fleets into the animation of his face. He puts his hand on Jack's shoulder and says something in a low voice, pleading; and Jack throws the hand off. Bum sits down opposite him, and Jack orders more champagne.

A girl came up to the table and kicked Bum's hat off with an accurate flick of a slippered toe.

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"I saw you first," she laughed.

Bum looked her over calmly, as if taking the points of a horse. She was dark and heavy, with black eyes and rouged cheeks—not at all to Bum's taste.

"Yes," he drawled, picking up his hat, "but I saw you most."

She laughed maliciously and passed on. A tall, slender individual, with dark, waxed mustaches, a costly, braided Mexican band about his Stetson, and a pair of white, velvety hands, long and flashing with diamonds, had been speculatively counting and noting the labels on the bottles scattered about Jack's feet.

"Are you gentlemen in the mood for a little hand around?" he inquired, with oily, flexible politeness.

Bum nodded and shifted his chair.

"No," said Jack, gruffly.

Tonopah St. John surveyed him with a smoky flare in black eyes and a satirical curl of thin lips.

"I see," he remarked, a depth of meaning in the soft tones. "Would you object to moving to another table, sir, while I accommodate this gentleman?"

"Yes," returned Jack, in the same uncompromising key, "I would. I'm perfectly comfortable as I am." He had absolute command over his tongue now, in spite of the bottles under the table.

Bum's eye flashed as he noted something in the throng near by, and beckoned. A girl came up to him and placed her hand on his shoulder, smiling into his dark face. Jack, paying no heed to the gambler by his chair, was watching his friend intently. The girl was a blonde of the pure type, with flaxen hair and large blue eyes. Her features were perfect; it was a beautiful, soulless face with curving cheeks, all alight with recklessness and abandon. She needed no rouge—*yet*. And she could not have been over seventeen—in that shameless gown, prodigal of the curves of neck and bosom. Not over seventeen!

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"Why haven't I seen you before, sweetheart?" Bum was asking, his eyes full of leaping sparks.

"Are you sure you see me now?" she cooed.

"Am I?" he laughed delightedly, circling her waist and drawing her to a seat upon his knee. "I sure *am*!" and gave her a squeeze which made her laugh smotheredly.

"Not *that*!" cried Jack, an agony in his bloodshot eyes. "Not that, Bum. Leave the women alone." Then, persuasively, "You know you don't care for her, anyway."

"The devil I don't!" retorted Bum, a dark flush upon his cheeks, still pressing the girl on his knee. She was gazing freezingly at Jack and showing a perfect row of pearls. "This love stuff is a religion with me."

"Yes," replied Jack, bitterly, "love is a religion; but such love-making as that is pure devilry."

"How about it, sweetest? Devilry is good enough for me. Are you game for a shot at a little devilry?"

The girl returned his laughter, an arm about his neck.

"Who let the sky pilot in?" she exclaimed, with scorn.

"And fried to the eyes, too," interpolated Tonopah St. John. "I'll speak to Bennett—"

"It will do you no good," sneered Jack. "Bennett never kicks out a hundred bucks a night. . . . Yes, I'm beastly drunk, my fine gentleman. You wanted some of the drunk's money, didn't you? Well, I've changed my mind and decided to give you a chance. Sit down."

"Will you care to change places? To sit by the wall here will make you more comfortable," suggested the gambler in his oily voice.

"Gramercy for your courtesy," answered Jack, contemptuously. "I've said my comfort was absolute. Deal the cards."

Tonopah complied, making the game three-handed. Jack was looking at the girl, nothing but pity in his eyes, which seemed once more clear and masterful. He pulled out the chair beside him as the cards went round.

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"Let the child loose, Bum. I want her to sit down by me here and talk to me," taking up his hand and appropriating his share of the chips. The girl complied, mocking, with a droop of the eyelid at Bum; she expected to have some fun at the "preacher's" expense. Jack's cards were poor; he flung them down and turned to her. She stared up in his face with piquant sauciness, her plump elbows on the table.

"Child," said Jack, his earnest, haggard eyes on her face, "I'm not a preacher. I've been on a solid drunk for two whole weeks. Does that look as though I intended to preach at you?" His voice fell to an inaudible whisper in her ear; and her face flamed. He picked up his cards again, and lost two blue chips on two pair to Tonopah's flush. Presently he continued, his eyes cold on Tonopah, whose aces fumbled in an unaccountable manner under the calm scrutiny as he dealt again.

"In a moment or two I've decided to begin gathering in a few of those chips across the board there, and I'm going to give them all to you."

She flung an arm about his neck ecstatically, winking round at McMillan.

"Oh, do, *please!* I'll buy a diamond necklace!"

Jack quietly drew the arm down from his neck and looked at the hand in his own square, powerful one. It looked so small and fragile. Then, as deliberately, he placed it in her lap. She gazed astonished at this man, who, even in his cups, had nothing but gentleness and reverence for women—though of her sort. He produced a large revolver and put it on the table in front of him.

"St. John," he smiled sweetly, "you're not in your usual form. Pick up that card on the floor, Bum. Ah, an ace! You have so much stage fright to-night that I must relieve you of the onus of dealing. Perhaps I can do it better than you. I've been drinking myself to death for so long that it makes me quite peevish to have people trying to make me see double. Unique,

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this!" running over the cards. "A deck with six jacks and four aces, minus the one we found on the floor. A deck quite *non compos mentis*."

He glanced at Tonopah, who was visibly gathering himself for a refuge under the table, his eye roving for an ally or the proprietor. The days of gun-fighting are over; but a crazy cowpuncher might do anything.

"Be calm, sir, I need your money." Bum grinned with enjoyment as Jack dealt the cards, fixing them quite as he pleased, and quite clumsily. "Just this once, to make it even."

He gathered in his nominal winnings and turned the chips over to the girl. When he dealt again it was perfectly according to green-baize ethics. He did not need to "dope" the deck any more, for he had noted the reason St. John had wanted him to change places, and St. John had not seen him note it: the gambler's hand in detail reflected in the highly polished oak paneling, however the man tried to hold it. St. John could not turn to find out whether he was really protecting himself or not without giving the snap away. He attempted to shift his seat. Jack looked at him. He stayed where he was.

"Bum, you deal," sighed Jack, wearily. "My fingers are all thumbs." He passed them over his eyes, and turned to order more champagne. The waiter started to fill a glass for the girl.

"No," said Jack, pleasantly, pouring the contents into his own, already empty; "the real sort never touch liquor."

She made a little *moue* at him and moved as if to get up; but he took her hand and drew her gently to her seat again. In the intervals of play he whispered in her ear. What he said to her no one knows, but it began to paint a growing horror in the blue eyes. She was very young. . . . Jack was constantly winning, and often ran the reassured gambler up to large pots. Tonopah was convinced it was fool's luck—and not the picture in the oak panels.

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Finally she flung back her head and said in a voice meant to be hard, but which was only childish:

"You are a strange man, telling me all these things. Don't you know," defiantly, "that I'm here because hell is too good for me? I—"

"You've made a mistake, a trifling blunder," returned Jack, softly. "You are not wicked and dashing and bold. You only think you are. You are only a lost child, and someone is crying somewhere for you. There are poor souls, I know, who would laugh me to scorn if I tried to say to them what I am saying to you. You are not one of them. I saw the half fear back in your eyes and the droop in your child mouth when I said someone. . . . I know. It—it was a beast who looked like a man and used scent on his hair; and you—you worked at a ribbon counter, perhaps. It was not your fault. It is not difficult to tell what *you* are. No, you are not going to laugh. You are going to—"

The girl broke down and sobbed upon the table. Jack's attention was no longer on her; he looked for St. John's chips. They were all gone, and the gambler was sulky, with a smoky malice in his black eyes. Bum was studying the girl, a strange, quizzical expression on his face.

"That 'll do, St. John," remarked Jack, calmly. "Pay up and beat it; we run no bank here."

St. John demurred. Jack glanced at him with a cool gleam of strong teeth. St. John paid and left. Perhaps he was seeking the proprietor. Jack leaned over the girl and drew her erect in her chair with an arm about her shoulder. She gazed through her tears into his face. At his smile she only burst into sobs again. People turned to look at her with curiosity.

"No need for the water works," said Jack cheerfully, patting her shoulder. He pressed a crisp mass of bills into her hands. "'Sh! you've done me a heap of good, little Missy. Run along home to—"

He started to rise, and abruptly the blazing room swam

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about him, a fiery whirligig of mirrors and strange faces. The table reeled up and struck him in the face. From a vast distance he heard Bum calling to him.

"Jack!"

"Going back, Bum," he muttered, his face against the wood; "sleepy—going—" And a black veil came down over his consciousness.

The part that was really Jack was not there to feel McMillan pulling at his shoulder, or to see a young woman stopped bruskiy by a man at the next table.

"How'd you get all that?" he gritted, and tore a wad of bills from her bodice. She looked about appealingly, and saw the unconscious man on the table.

"Get along out there on the floor with you!" exclaimed the burly one, his red face creasing into lines of cruelty. "We'll have no side graft like this here."

She went, her pretty face colorless, shrinking with terror from his brutality.

"Here he is!" St. John indicated the table where McMillan was attempting to rouse his friend.

"That him?" inquired the policeman. "Where'll you have him?"

Bennett, the proprietor, looked on without immediate reply, chewing a toothpick.

"Call it disorderly conduct," he grunted at length, and turned on his heel.

The policeman jerked at Jack's collar.

"Come out of that!" blazed Bum, warding him off. The big Irishman phlegmatically shifted his attention and his hand to Bum's collar.

"That's all right," he rumbled, pleasantly, and beckoned to a plain-clothes man. "Take this other mutt, will you?"

"What's the charge against this man, officer?" purred the voice of a stranger.

The plain-clothes man looked—gasped, staggered back, catching his breath. Well he might. He had just read "Five Thousand Dollars Reward" on a man's face!

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"I know you!" he almost shouted, leaping at the newcomer's throat. Instantly the rooms were an uproar.

"Oh, you do, do you?" retorted Rohan, with a pale flame in his eyes, and dropped the officer like a log with a wicked crook to the jaw. Rohan's glance leaped to the weapon on the table. Its muzzle swept the room in an instant.

"He said *he* knew me, you people. I reckon *you'd* better, too. . . . Come, get the boy out of here!"

"He's heavy," panted Bum.

The giant strode forward a pace, his eye scornful on everything in the place. He gathered the unconscious man under one arm like a divided sack of meal and thrust out of a side door before they could breathe. The next moment a closed carriage was clattering at a gallop through the streets to the railroad station. . . . There was no one left outside for the police to question but a dumfounded hack-driver.

"You're a bird, McMillan," reproached Steve, as, panting, they got Jack to the platform of a slow-moving caboose and watched the receding lights of the city, "to let the boy get in such a shape."

"Well, *you've* not had much previous success managing him," Bum muttered, momentarily forgetful of his gratitude for succor.

"No," admitted the giant, on a low note of his voice, striking a match to look at the pale face. "Damn the hussy!" he went on, the sound all compassion for the haggard features.

"Who?" queried Bum, wonderingly.

"That yellow-haired trollop up Trevett—" Steve stopped and would say no more. The freight clinked along over the rails, and Bum was none the wiser.

There are so many pitiful signposts along this road of Life that he must needs be a very strong man who would stop at every one and draw some poor stranded soul into

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the right road again; or a very callous one not to be sickened and depressed by the wan figures wrecked at the crossroads.

"You're pretty nice, ain't you, cub?" leered the man with the nugget for a scarfpin. "Ain't nothin' skittish and triffin' about you, is they? Game, ain't you?"

His liquor-steeped brain and personality seemed to fill the dark corner where they were with a smolder of sodden flame. The blare of the band was heard as through a haze; the girl caught her breath. His arm was round her, and her gown all but torn from her shoulders.

"You've got lots of money, haven't you?" snuggling up to the drunken sot. "I like a good sport like you. There was a fool here awhile ago telling me about—" A smothered laugh that was hysterical and not on a pretty note. "Oh, he gassed about home and— Do I look like a pussy in the corner making tea? No, I'm here for my health—and because hell is too good for me."

XV

FAR MUSIC

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone.

—*Keats.*

WHEN he awoke the afternoon sun was peeping into the open door of the bunk-house, or was it through the stained-glass apse of some vast cathedral? A mysterious wonder filled his whole being, and yet he did not know in the least what had amazed him. He did not even know where he was, and did not greatly care. But he felt somehow new, as if something marvelous and passing mere surprise had come into the world. He lay there in a dim daze, his eyes open, his body quite still. After several moments he raised his head from the pillow and shook it, tentatively. This had grown in the last two weeks to be a matutinal custom. It confirmed his worst fears; his world rocked with a crackling of flame. With a moan he buried his face in the pillow again.

"Oh, you fool, you fool!"

For half an hour he lay there, his head splitting. Then, in desperation, he sat up and swung his legs out of bed, subsequently opening his eyes and gripping at some straws in his reeling world. Steeling his jaw, the interior of the bunk-house swam gradually before him; he stared at it with his mouth open.

At this opportune moment Steve Rohan entered, ostensibly for a new rope.

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"Hello, Steve!" cried the frowsy apparition in the top bunk.

"Hello, Jack," returned the other, pleased, but quite as a matter of course, fumbling under his bunk for the rope.

"How'd I get here?" questioned Jack.

"Search me. Why, I didn't know you'd been and gone anywheres!"

Jack shook his head between his hands again, with caution. It felt as big as a pumpkin.

"Garry!" he cried, despairingly, "I can't have dreamed *all* of that!"

"I reckon not," agreed Steve, his black eyes glistening.

"What? . . . Oh, say, Steve, a red-hot salamander is crawling all around in my brains. I—"

"I brung you up a bucket of water from the creek," vouchsafed the giant; "but let me see," placing one tremendous hand on Jack's shoulder, and the other on his chin.

"Holy Reno!" he exclaimed, at the vision of Jack's tongue and throat. "One bucket would be a drop. Come, you—"

"Come you back, you British soldier; come you back to Mandalay," chanted the patient; it was impossible to dampen his quizzical bent of humor.

"Come over to the pump," resumed Steve, somewhat startled by this irrelevance, "and I'll pump some of that ice water over your head."

"Mrs. Hallowell or Annie would see me," objected Jack, shamefacedly.

"No, she won't," asserted Steve. "They're both putting up preserves or something."

Steve reached up and lifted him out of the bunk like a child, resting Jack's head on his shoulder when his senses swam. He settled him in a chair and helped him on with his trousers and boots, his attentions as tender as a woman's to the sick.

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Out by the corral he pumped ice water over the delinquent's head for five whole minutes.

"Wow, but it's cold!" spluttered Jack, starting to remove the dripping seat of all his miseries from beneath the numbing splash. The pump clanked on.

"Hey! Keep that under there," grumbled Steve, "or you'll have a headache that 'll last a week!"

"But it's freezing my scalp," objected the pumpee.

"Let 'er freeze," admonished the giant, putting out his knee for Jack to lean against. "Brains are better frozen than addled."

"Say, I'm an awful fool, don't you think?" inquired Jack, casually, wringing the water from his mop.

"You got a awful tongue there," returned Steve, non-committal—"burnt, scorched, frazzled."

Jack attempted to get a view of it in the placid corral trough, making a wry face.

"What's to-day?" he asked, abruptly.

"June twenty-eighth," replied Steve, off his guard.

Jack looked at him.

"No," he said, slowly, "I didn't dream *all* of that. I'm no Rip Van Winkle. How did I get here, Steve?" he begged.

"Search me," was all the satisfaction he got.

"Where's Bum McMillan?"

"Been here a coon's age. You ain't been a-dreaming about *him*, have you?"

"Um," unconvinced.

"Jack," advised the giant, putting a great arm about the younger man and guiding him over to the bench in front of the bunk-house, "you better go back to bunk and stay there till to-morrow. Then you'll—"

"Pshaw!" said Jack, but sinking willingly enough to the bench. Steve dried Jack's head with his own bandanna.

"I got a two-year-old," he said, "over here. So I better be hiking now."

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He was gone before Jack could thank him.

The young man sat there before the bunk-house, alone, with the lowering sun gilding his wet head and accentuating the haggard lines of his face. It shone into his shadowed eyes; they were very clear again, the golden beams lighting up a reverie in them that made them seem quite dark. The note of the windmill and the far boom of Trevett were all that was audible at that quiet hour; but he heard neither. His ears sang as though populated by swarms of locusts, katydids, and honey-bees. Through this inner clamor a woman's voice, soft, tender, sweetly pleading, made him start and look about him.

"Jack!"

But he was alone with the insect chorus upon his eardrums. He laughed shortly at what he deemed his folly, and gazed off down the valley. Insidiously, without a change in the apparent length of the sound waves tormenting him, above the ringing of his ears, floated in the unequivocal strains of a far-away brass band which had no existence on earth, on any of the planets, or in the vasts of extra-solar space.

"Say," he said, whimsically eying the visible expanse of the bunk-house, "Jack, you two need a promenade. You-all Siamese twins had better ramble along before the royal elephants circumnavigate the corner with the Prince of Borrioboola Gha in the howda, escorted by his regal bodyguard of cobra-tailed leopards and rattlesnakes. Yessir, I have a hunch we two had better take a stroll."

As he rose to his feet the woman's voice came again, low, tremulous, insistent.

"Jack!"

He did not even look about him at this second invocation.

"Very well," he murmured, pressing his temples. "I'm here, if you'll only let me be."

His legs were very wabbly, but he made a guilty, aimless circuit to avoid the corrals and other parts of the

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Sleeping Seven likely to be inhabited at that hour. And found himself with his face set along the trail up Trevett.

"Oh, well, what's the odds?" he mused, doggedly. The mountain air, with its tincture of balsam and willows, was like balm in his lungs after his more than ten nights and days in a bar-room. "What's the odds?" and he plodded up the brusk incline, defiantly keeping step to that psychical brass band. Presently he passed the Mason cottage, set back like a square of white jade in a shimmering velvet of aspens; his hands in his pockets, eyes carelessly speculative, whistling a noiseless air in time with the—the cymbals. He came to the Falls; they beckoned him off the road like a white arm; and he slumped down before them on a bank redolent of star-flowers, blue-bells, columbines, . . . and violets.

"Yes, I hear you," he muttered, wearily. "I'm here; but I'm very—very tired."

He buried his hot face in the cool fragrance of the grasses; and it was slowly borne in upon him, in the crooning roar of the Falls, that it was a beautiful day, and the out of doors one celestial harmony. Of these things nothing could deprive him, except death, imprisonment, or his own folly. No, not even *she*! With an unaccountable transition the blare of the band that had so tormented him melted into a far-off, delicate symphony, a melody cooled and distilled into sweet essence of harmony, as across fair waters in the evening. The sweetness of it dissolved his limbs in delicious languor.

"Do that some more," he murmured. "Make this part a continuous performance, and I'll be ready with 'Oh, you vintages of old France! Oh, you Mumm's Extra Dry!' Bottled orchestration of fairy harps! . . . Yes, I'm here. I haven't the least idea who you are; but please don't interrupt . . ."

He dreamed the mother he had never seen—the fair spirit of that ideal portrait—came smiling and kissed his

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burning brow. He said, "Mother, I love you," and the beloved vision faded away.

Like to the *motif* of the changing elfin melody that steeped his whole soul, the scent of honeysuckle breathed around him: the sun-netted, leaf-filled arbor of the summer-house in that old Virginia garden; and birds singing. There were only two children there: one he did not see very plainly, for he seemed somehow to *be* that tousled youngster in knickerbockers. But the features of the little girl—her silken flaunt of fair curls over a starched pinafore, and her great, childish, nameless eyes with a hint of tears lurking in them—were before him, wistful, pleading, reproachful. He even saw the maternal solicitude with which she cuddled an ugly black rag dolly in her arms.

"Jacky," the little girl was coaxing, "you won't go away and leave *me*! You wouldn't rather go 'way off to school than play with *me*? Oh, Jacky! 'F you won't go I'll give you anything. I will! Anything! Even Dinah!"

He saw the impulsive gesture with which she held out the doll to him, and the tears on her dimpled cheeks. Then, before he could recall it, the scene melted away to a mist. Bees hummed; a deeper bourdon throbbed into the flutings of fancy, and then sank away.

A girl leaned over him with infinite tenderness as he slept; and her eyes filled with tears to see how hollow, ill-shaven, haggard, was the unconscious face. A ragged collie came lolloping up on three legs, and would have licked the sleeping cheek if the girl had not warned him off with an imperious gesture. He sat down close by and took a tentative gnaw at the paw that was in splints; then he rolled about on his haunches and began to scratch his ear intently, his lolling tongue and good-humored wolfish jaws in the general direction of the young woman. She seated herself in the grass, tucking her skirts daintily about her, and drew the shaggy nondescript up to her side,

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where he lopped over, loose, panting, and perfectly happy.

The young woman was paying no attention to the embroidery frame in her lap; her dark eyes were rapt on the sleeper's face, painting a sad story of neglected, reckless wanderings into the worn lines of it. At times the gazing eyes welled over. His hat had fallen off, and the sun was creeping upon his forehead; she drew the brim gently around so that his face was shaded. He stirred in his sleep.

"Yes," he muttered, "I'm here. I don't know who you are, but please don't call me any more. I'm very—very—tired."

She drew back her hand as from a flame. Jack shifted over upon his back and opened his eyes. She watched him, breathless, with a panic impulse to flee. But he was only shaking his head in an incomprehensible way; the result seemed to give him satisfaction.

"*Sois tranquille*," he murmured, and stretched his arms. Fascinated, she regarded him fixedly, unable to stir. His hand touched her gown. He started up on his elbow, as if there were a haze over his eyes.

"Ah," he breathed, "I have been waiting for you a long time," and gazed mistily, expecting the vision to vanish. But his hand was on something that trembled.

"And I have been waiting for *you*, oh, so long!" she answered, vainly striving to keep the tremor out of her voice. He started, drew a hand across his eyes. When he looked again it was as though he did not know her, so bewildered was his expression. Violet gave a little yearning cry, almost a sob.

It may have been the shock of seeing something so exquisite where he had expected to see nothing at all that held his eyes riveted to her face, which carmined and cooled under his gaze. Perhaps it was the piquant chin quivering above the bare, lovely throat in the sailor blouse, which fluttered up and down with her tremulous

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breathing. Perhaps it was those wonderful eyes that scolded him, cried out for him as across a void of tears, reflected a tiny image of him with a thrill of pure joy, seemed to beseech, were humble, proud, and questioning, and just now overflowing with— Ah! She was the most beautiful thing in the world; but her eyes meant nothing. *Nothing*. He knew. She should make mock of him no longer.

"You poor boy!" she cried.

"Pardon me," he said, composedly, sitting up. "It's you. I—I was half asleep, I think."

He started to rise, but she put out a hand and clasped his, stopping him on his knees. Her touch burnt him like flame, and clung so that he could not get away.

"I'm sorry if I intruded," he said, distantly. "This really is not the place for a tramp to take a nap."

"Oh, Jack!" she cried. "Where have you been? Have you forgotten that I've been here—waiting for you to come?"

"It's no use," he replied, steadily, looking into the deep eyes. "You have exhausted all possibilities of fun you could have at my expense"—then bitterly—"if there ever was a possibility."

"I want to know, Jack, why—" still holding him fast.

He gazed quietly down at her face. Something in the cool mastery of his expression awed her; his face itself terrified her. When a man's physical and mental being are in health and harmony, and in a certain degree of repose, the real character of the individual lies dormant behind the mask of flesh. But whenever one is soul sick, mind sick, bodily sick, or very weary, the fleshy part of the face is chiseled away, the fullness is graved with lines of iron, and what a man really is stands disclosed, chastened of minor detail, in the sharp-cut lines. A weak nature is stripped naked there, in its abject submission to circumstance; but a strong character shines out in all its indomitable will and tenacity of purpose—the never-say-

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die of the ages. It was thus in Jack's haggard face: the sweetness of nature was all drowned in that cataract of will, the strength and obstinacy that is beauty—because it is so feared.

The girl trembled. She thought to see scorn there, of her—and of his own weakness. The eyes said: What serious and lasting harm can a mere weak woman do a strong man? The eyes answered themselves: None; it is the violence of man's own madness that leads him down to destruction. Never once has a *woman* herself been the actual power; it is all a part of the man himself. And madness, said the calm gaze, I am the master of that—and of you.

"You really want to know?" indifferently.

"Yes, I—"

"Well," he said, brutally, "I've been drunk every hour of the last two weeks, ever since I saw you," with a freezing nod, "if *that* can furnish you with any further satisfaction."

He made an effort to withdraw his hand.

"Oh!" she cried, with a sob, eyes wide on her agony of pity. "Why did you do that?"

She was maddening; he crushed her in his arms.

"You ask me that!" he said, between clenched teeth, looking down at the unresisting riot of color that was her cheeks.

"I beg your pardon," springing to his feet as though stung, and releasing her.

"Oh, Jack, Jack!" she cried, her eyes swimming up at him.

"That's all right. Perhaps I enjoyed the novelty of being a mixing-vat."

"Boy!" she pleaded. "Tell me, why did you do it? And, oh, you'll never do it again, will you, Jack?"

"No," said he, shortly, with a distorted smile. "I surely won't. It suits me better not to, now."

She winced under an icy something in his eyes.

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"I don't wonder at it. Only to think what you have lost!"

"Now you are seeing motor cars and yachts and the pillars of the Exchange," he said, scornfully; and then, more gently: "The casting away of that fool's gold is my greatest good fortune. But I have lost something infinitely more precious than that."

"Your reputation?"

"I might as well be frank with you," he said, with chill sincerity. "Yes, I lost much more than that. I lost my faith and belief in you. There is only left something of which I am half ashamed."

It would be useless to indicate the imploring, self-abasement, humble confession of the eyes, looking up at him.

"You don't know this," he resumed, doggedly, "but it is not really you I see on your knees in the grass there. *You* are not a film of sunlight in the most beautiful hair in the world; *you* are not a blush on a cheek like satin; *you* are not the perfume of a pair of sweet lips that would burn me like fire; *you* are not even the melting images I see in eyes that have never told me anything but lies. No, I have lost *you*. I think something went out of me at the same time, and left me dead—dead inside. When I saw you again"—whimsically—"there was another funeral. It's over now. I think I'm buried for good."

"I don't understand."

"No," he said, with kindness, "you do not understand. Perhaps you are made that way, and it is not your fault. You are merely something which I cannot come near without wanting to take into my arms. I have lost the real You, and of that other insanity I am ashamed. You see I am frank," he smiled. "People have given me the reputation of being cross-grained and obstinate. I am so. I say, *I will not*; and I am stronger than you. You have been with me in spirit all my life, painting my world in purple and silver, and then again in gray and deep

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mourning. I think you are done now, little artist with the irresponsible fingers. I shall take the brush, and do my own painting. It is a serious undertaking; but I shall rub out the sketch you have made of me, and paint in my own world. And you are not in it."

"Oh, Jack, are you sure this isn't that terrible pride of yours?"

"Yes," he averred, unexpectedly, straightening his shoulders. "It *is* my pride. I am myself, and I am proud of it. A small thing"—smiling—"but mine own. I have never done anything to be ashamed of. And I shall not begin now."

"I—I meant—because I am—rich and you are—poor?"

"That is as you made me, and is rubbed out with that other sketch I told you of. No, that doesn't the least matter."

"But—" faintly.

"Take it as you say, then," he resumed, carelessly. "Real gold is gold everywhere, whether picked out of the mire or a rich bracelet set on that round, white wrist of yours. Women"—with a hint of scorn—"do not pick their gold out of the mire; they must see it on the counter at Tiffany's, and it must be made up and marked by the famous jeweler. But I would take mine where I found it. If you were a blind flower girl on a Roman stairway, with a bunch of posies and one copper in the world, and were really *you*— If you were the grandest princess of the earth, and were still *you*, do you suppose I would look for the Tiffany mark? But this is very unprofitable chatter. There is my world"—pointing down Trevett at the shadowed purple of the parkland—"and—I no longer see you in it."

The crippled collie came up and licked the hand which sank by his side, wagging his tail and looking up in the man's face.

"Hello, Had, old man. How's the paw?" bending to examine it. "Coming on fine, hey?"

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"What did you call him?" inquired the girl, struggling for composure.

"Oh, he's only another tramp," returned Jack. "And tramps have a masonic system among 'em. Hey, doggins?"

"Please tell me!"

"Oh, excuse me. I called him *Had*—for short."

"What an unusual name! And what is it in full?"

"It's of no importance, but I don't mind telling you. He's an old crony of mine. When I saw him first he'd been kicked around the cook-house so much, and was so starved and scrawny and scared of his shadow, that I sort of adopted him. We're such a congenial pair, the two of us, that I gave him the private pet name of *Had*, 'Honor a Delusion' being one interpretation thereof. Use it as a verb form if you will. He likes either."

"Oh," with a touch of hysteria, "you've become cynical!"

"No," gently, "I told you we were cronies. . . . Say, *Had*, old man, 'f I were you I'd stay up here where there aren't so many boots around and you get a good, square meal once in a century."

The soft, shearing, metallic jangle of the triangle at the Masons' back door made him pause with half-turned head. "Your dinner-hour. Please pardon my intrusion—and exit," he bowed, and swung off down the trail.

The dog appeared to have understood him, and only followed his retreating form with reluctant, adoring eyes. But the girl could not see him at all; she was weeping bitterly.

XVI

THE SOJOURNER

Blessed are the pure in heart, . . .

—*Saint Matthew.*

WELL along in an azure and gold Sunday morning Jack tilted back against the shady side of the bunk-house with a small blue book in his hand. A brown-paper cigarette had gone out in his mouth, and he was gazing, without appearing to see, at the other men over by the corral. It was the customary Sunday morning game of horseshoes. And, as usual, Bum McMillan crouched nonchalant, sphinxlike, by the peg, with a calculating eye on clinking falls and relative distances. Chance surely was his goddess. Likewise, little Pete Tabary's whole existence hung paralyzed on the circling flight of his last, with outstretched hand and tense features to the outcome.

Sandy Hallowell had just been with Jack, and, noting his altered looks and his pallor, had questioned him delicately, with paternal solicitude. Sandy had an idea that Rohan had been leading his young friend into devious ways.

"Ye would be putting me off, boy," said Sandy, reproachfully; then, nodding significantly with a narrow line of Presbyterian lips, "but ye needna think I dinna ken. Yon man—a guid man with the colts that be too braw—but nane sae good anint his ain kind. . . . What is it ye read? Wha' is this mon Carlyle?"

Sandy had settled down against the wall with his thumbs

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thrusting out the armholes of his unbuttoned vest, considering with the gravity of a Knox the old-clothes theory of *Sartor Resartus* as the younger man explained it to him.

"Ye say this writing-man says there is nae solid ground, nae mares, nae foals a-frisking in yon twelve stretch? Nae mountains yonder, nae blue sky aboon us? We dream it, aye?" scathingly. "It's only appe-earance?"

Sandy laughed derisively, his stub of a beard straight out. A fleece of cloud darkened the sun a moment; he stopped laughing, and his face set in judicial lines.

"It isna possible. Nae man should write such mizzle about ult-ee-mate realitie. . . . What's that ye say? Ye say he was a Scotsman?"

The foreman rose slowly to his feet, his face a mask of struggling disbelief.

"A Scotsman, aye? A Scotsman. Sure, it *might* be so."

Sandy trundled slowly around the bunk-house, grumbling in his beard.

"A Scotsman. . . . Aweel, we ken and we dinna ken."

The young man sat there alone for some time, the sun on his face; but his pallor seemed only to deepen.

He arose presently and put *Sartor* in his pocket. Over by the bars of the twelve stretch his pony whinnied and tossed her head for him. He bethought himself to steal some bread from Slovenly Peter, the cookee, for her. As she nibbled at it in his hands he whispered things in the silken ears.

"It's good to be together again, little chum."

A tinge of unrest settled in his face, and a shadow.

"I'm tired, girly. I'm tired. I need something, and I don't know what. Let's go and have a talk. Maybe we'll feel better then."

Man and horse passed the house in the aspens without so much as a glance. Sandy bore him along and up with an assured leisure which spoke volumes of previous acquaintance with the route. It was a high trail, winding,

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doubling, and ever winding, rising gradually above a widening panorama of foaming torrents and shafts of spruce into a realm of new vision where reigned the empire of the distances. Slumbering masses of mountains which had lain hidden before swam gradually into view; black reaches and spires crusted with tatters of snow and breathing the breath of snow and of eternal peace. Still the pony clambered up a precipitous trail; and all the far billows of crag and fell assumed a tint of solemn hesitancy between purple and pink—a color which seemed to tinge the snow itself. It was the color of the upland vistas, the color from which the Spaniard named this land *Colorado*. He did well, for the shade is never seen elsewhere.

Jack turned off Trevett presently into a perpendicular cleft haunted by the voice of slender waters plunging swift. The cleft opened into a vast amphitheater of treeless green and rock-reds. The pennons of columbine and the bloody splashes of painter's brush flowered innumerable along the parallel trail and stream; but the water itself was tainted drab with the tailings of mines above. At one of these low-browed tunnels high up on the mountainous wall Jack finally dismounted, flinging the reins over his horse's head. The long, fan-shaped sweep of the dump from this mine glowed a fresh, vivid blue in the late sun, a striking contrast to the other dumps in the neighborhood, which were without exception weathered a pale gray. It was the difference between life and death; all these other mines were dead, abandoned; this one alone lived and had an animating spirit, a man.

He had gone some distance into the tunnel before he reflected that it was Sunday, and that it would hardly be in accordance with what he knew of his friend's character to find him at work on that day. The interior dusk crept around him, and he lit a candle he had found sticking in the timbers at the entrance. About him the water dripped from the timbers in staccato emphasis, and in his nostrils nipped the soft, half-pungent tang of stale powder

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smoke in a cloistered, sunless air. A car stood on the rails near the breast of the tunnel, half full of waste. Into the heap of shattered rock that the shots had blown down was sticking a shovel, just as though some one had purposed to fill the car and had been interrupted between shovelfuls. Jack held the candle near the reeking wall.

"Nothing but talc and porphyry. Why won't the old man quit?"

A dark smear on the shovel handle caught his eye—a minute splotch of crimson froth, as of blood.

He snatched up the shovel on impulse and dug energetically into the heap of waste on the iron plat. In all he made several trips with the car to the fast-shadowing dump outside before the rusty surface of the plat was exposed. His candle stub was practically gone when he stopped and felt his way out of the tunnel in the dark. Then he clambered around a jut of mossy rock some distance up the mountainside, where a cabin of logs squatted under a turf roof. All at once he remembered the pony, and whistled, hoping she might hear. Sure enough, up she came clattering, her mouth bristling with bottom grass, to be divested of bridle and doublecinch. As eagerly she scampered away up the cañon to a place where she knew the grass was sweetest and the stream untainted.

The sun swooped suddenly behind the mighty barriers; a gleam of ruddy light shone out from the cabin's one window. Gradually all was obscure outside, and nothing stirred the silence but the whisper of the stream to the rocks. Through the window Jack could see the head of an old man poring over a book before him on the table—a venerable man with hair and beard nearly white. His features were waxen, almost transparent, but he had the wide, dreaming eyes of a child, or of a seer. For the rest he had the bent shoulders of one who had spent his life avoiding with his head the topsets of timbers in a drift or the pipe line at a crosscut. The hand upon which he

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propped his chin was knotted and toil-hardened, and the index finger was gone.

Jack stood there gazing at his friend's face, and the truth of an observation of his own burst upon him anew. As age advances its pacing steps over the heads of human beings, the stuff of which the real soul and essence of an individual is composed tends to volatilize outward, as it were. What we really are, the thoughts we cherish as familiar spirits, forces itself into sight where it can be read by every one—graven by a mystic chisel upon the brow and in every line of the face. As a man grows older—so it had seemed to Jack, especially among the professional classes—the appearance of an intellectual peerage wanes to a fainter and fainter film above the arrogance and cruelty, the living lie and the dead, the over-reaching and distrustfulness, the sensuality and the greed, that such a man may have nursed all along in his character. But the man he saw through that window had certainly, despite the evidences of stern toil upon his hands and frame, lived out the major part of his near eighty years in the calm contemplation of himself and the world—a purely intellectual life. It showed in the lines of that face, the spiritual beauty, the semblance of a soul dwelling on a lofty peak, with peace and vast vistas eternally within its ken. It was a face to inspire with reverential awe the usual human atom following the contracted life of the world as we know it—provided the observer himself have the faintest spark to shine for him into the dim vasts of ultimate truth, or if he have the least desire to know the depths thereof.

Jack pulled the leather thong in the door, and entered without knocking. Calmly, as a matter of course, the old man arose and gripped hands with him in silence.

"Pardner," said Jack, simply, "I'm tired, and I've come to you."

"My son," answered the other, his old eyes bright with welcome and sympathy, "we wish all whom we love peace.

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But the Lord watched between me and thee while we were absent one from the other."

Quietly he took down a frying-pan hanging over the stove, and began slicing potatoes in it for supper.

There was something homely and comfortable about that one rough room. The light from a log fire, burning in a broken-arched fireplace of rubble close beside the cookstove, ebbed and flowed in constant flicker over the packed dirt floor, giving recurrent glimpses of the features of the place. There were no pictures on the bark walls, only a scale map of the Leadville Mining District. The inevitable double-decker bunk occupied one corner, with a long, single-action Colt's depending from a belt of cartridges at the head. A somnolent and very rotund short-haired dog of doubtful breed lay curled in undisturbed state upon the frayed rag comforter in the lower bunk. Jack himself was tilted back before the fire in one of the two chairs, home-made out of plank.

They were sitting together at the table with the supper dishes piled before them, and Jack had filled his after-supper pipe. His host noticed him glancing at a square of canvas bellying down from the rafters. The old prospector read his thought.

"I just became a trifle annoyed with the chipmunks," said he, mildly, in his odd diction. "I did not mind it much until they began to leap down into the very food I was preparing on the stove. They are welcome to help themselves to my supplies if they wish, but I'm compelled to draw the line at jumping into my victuals. Not that I wish the little creatures any harm, but—"

"I can't see that at all," Jack observed, some of his gloom already slipping from him. "I know how it used to be around here; it used to *rain* chipmunks, and they ate twice as much as you did yourself. And *you* put up a ten-dollar square of canvas as a dance floor for them! As if they don't keep us awake all night with their polkas

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on the roof every time I come to see you! And speaking of chipmunks—on the way up I didn't see a living thing along your trail but flowers and the conies."

"They are an ancient beast," mused the old man, making an involuntary movement toward a tattered Bible on the table.

"What do they live on, anyway? Sandy Hallowell says, 'I ken they must get bite and sup frae the air.'"

"Over three thousand years many have been pondering that problem. Let me see. 'The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks.' . . . 'The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies.' And Moses the Legislator says somewhere to the children of Israel that they shall not eat conies—let's see. 'And the cony because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.'"

"Ancient or not, I'm blessed if I'd want 'em to live with me!" resumed Jack, warmly, and then broke off short. "It's just that trait in you I wouldn't change for the world."

The old fellow smiled.

"Who are you to talk, my young friend?" A cough racked him, and his face contracted with pain; but the smile came again like a shaft of sunlight as soon as the spasm was over. Miner's consumption, the fruit of years of dark toil in dank atmospheres impregnated with the deadly powder gases, is inevitable in its end. "I've often wondered if I was not losing my memory. Every day or so I have had to stop in my own rightful task because I was too weary to finish; and yet the work is always done when I come back in the morning. I don't know how to thank you, my boy. I know I'm getting old and the weakness is coming on; but I'd rather have you come and see me than have you do my own task and go away without telling me you were here. Why, one day I struck a pocket, and forgot all about my dinner. But when I came

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up to the cabin that night my supper was all ready for me, smoking hot from the stove."

Jack reddened as if he had been detected in an act of dishonesty.

"That's a mistake of yours, old-timer. I haven't been up here for—a month it is now. I—"

"You know what it says here," pleaded the old man, laying his hand on the ragged Bible, his only book. "Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel. . . . Let your light so shine before men that—"

"They may see your good works. Oh, *that's* all right; but what if you pull up your bushel basket and show somebody *else's* light? Honest, I didn't—"

There was a look of pain on Olmond's face, as one who listens to falsehood on the lips of a friend; so Jack tried to shift the theme. He asked the old prospector how soon he would strike the vein; the latter could not unbend directly; still it was a subject too near the heart of a man who had gone through life "just going to strike the vein." The table was soon strewn with rude plats the old fellow had made of his own string of claims, and the wondrous blanket and fissure veins he was *positive* ran through the length of them.

"Why," said he, naïvely, his face of the child and the seer warming to the loved topic, "that is why I located them. They are all good as gold, from the Belshazzar to the David and Goliath."

He talked to Jack about the Queen of Sheba lode claim, the Zion Placer, and all the others until a late hour, twisting the plats so that Jack could see what he pointed to with the fingers of his maimed hand. The young man patiently heard him out, joring in the pleasure he saw in the seamed face, while the old fellow told the history of his properties. Jack had listened to the same thing over and over; and as usual the topic only died away from lack of fuel.

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Now they mused together before the fire, and the plump dog came to curl up at Olmond's feet.

"Pardner," said Jack, slowly, "something happened to me once that made me—numb. I've been letting that thing hold me down because I simply didn't care. I don't much now. You understand? You always do."

The old man's eyes glistened with sympathy.

"I think I do, son. A—a woman ought never to make—or mar—a real man."

"That is it," murmured Jack. "He does that himself." His jaw set; he went on in even statement. "I haven't been a man. I haven't turned a hair to be of service to any one."

"My boy, you—"

"Not a hair. You can't pull people up—from the bottom. I've stayed there from sheer apathy. But now I'm going to gather a little grubstake and climb. When I'm up a piece, on a solid bit of footing, I'm going to swing a rope."

He gripped the old prospector's knee, and smiled.

"I'm going to keep that noose busy drawing up someone here and there—the sort that are down. And odd whiles I'll tie a little knot of law in my rope—and drag a wolf *down*."

"A wolf?"

"*Wolves*. The solid-nerved, solid-bodied, eagle-minded creatures that have been on top from the beginning of time—twisting the whole human law by force or craft for their own pleasure. I'll have to go *up* to do it—but I'll pull at least a few—*down*."

"The men who control the world!"

"Exactly. It happens"—grimly—"I have a peculiarly good opportunity—from a glimpse I had once into inside workings of the wolf game. Once I knew one of the most successful men in the country, and—"

"You mean one of the richest?"

"Yes, that's it, old-timer. Money is the standard by

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which success is judged these days. He was very frank about the situation. He began life as a lawyer, without much capital. And he said he started in the profession with ideals—and wound up with deals. He regarded it as a legitimate development from the callowness of youth."

"And he is successful, you say?"

"Yes."

"Is he loved?"

A pause, while a massive iron-gray head and rugged features set with the seal of indomitable intelligence and power rose before the young man's mental vision. Intelligence, magnetism, and power, but not—

"I don't know," hesitated Jack. "But he has a wonderful personality. He attracts and repels as he chooses. He—"

"You say he is not *loved*—and yet successful. The word is hollow."

"He could easily make himself loved, but he prefers to remain ice and iron."

"Son," began the old miner, "I see that you don't agree with your own conception of success, and my mind goes with yours. Success is not achievement; it is *becoming*. And it is a chill goal where there is no love on the threshold."

"And what is *your* notion of success, pardner?"

"Ah," resumed Olmond, his sunken eyes lighting merrily, "but I think *you* are the successful man yourself. I have worked beside you in the mines, where love is not educated, and where it has a hard time to shine through many an exterior gnarled and knotted by toil, where the mind and soul look not in. And in every direction your young heart reached out—a soul turned toward you like a flower. A warm, clean heart glowing with kindness and a desire to help is its own reward."

The young man colored, but there were lines of bitterness about his mouth.

"You don't see all that in me," he said. "I am very

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selfish. I would be 'successful,' too, at any cost—if I did not despise the means—and the end."

"Your millionaire started as a lawyer," speculated the prospector, "and, I take it, neither as lawyer nor as man did he practise justice."

"No—yes, he always was law-abiding, and went to church."

"You know better than that, son. You, as well as I, have knocked about long enough to know that *law* is not *justice*."

"You are at it!" cried Jack. "He made his way as a corporation lawyer, and his intellect was such that the mighty came on bended knees for him to throw the white light of it into the tangled skein of their affairs. He said the law allows—even lends holy cognizance—to his practice. He'd deliberately divide his functions into two branches: to impart the legal means to big business whereby it might continue to practise brigandage without being taken red-handed, and showing it how to intrench itself if by chance it did fall foul of the law. After a while he decided to keep his knowledge to himself; and soon he *was* Big Business."

"A very superior sort of man. He worked by plan, where all the rest flounder along aimlessly. . . . And you are going to say that it is the system, the law, that is wrong and ought to be changed?"

"Yes, partly."

"Ah," replied Olmond, a stern light in his face, "the real trouble is not there, my boy. It is in the *men*. Had they the courage and high principle to live according to what they know is right, and not barely according to man-made law, which will always be imperfect, the system would evolve into a thing of divine justice and beauty."

"You don't deny, then, that the world is one complication?"

"My boy, I've lived a long time," quietly. "I've wandered among all sorts of camps, most of them the wide-

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open kind; and I used to think so, too. But now I know there is nothing—*nothing*, son, at all complicated about this world. The universe will sometime work in eternal peace according to one law, just one."

"What's that?"

"I know they have all forgotten it, these days of money and social position and what they call 'business.' Just the Golden Rule, my son."

The gnarled hand sought the worn Bible as if a divine warmth spread from it.

"Love one another."

The lonely man lived his Bible by day and dreamed it by night. Jack yearned over the simple, childlike heart, and envied the simplicity of its faith; but the Anglo-Saxon in him said nothing.

"Yes," murmured the old man, "love one another, do your own duty like a man, and it will come out all right."

"In other words—

*"'God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world'?"*

The old prospector did not recognize Browning; what is more, he disagreed with the poet.

"No, not exactly that. God has made us like unto himself. *We have got to do our share.* And I've often thought we would be pretty mean if we did not do *more than our share.*"

Olmond regarded Jack with his kindly, sunken eyes.

"You've been to school, and can speak a thought so that it sticks in the memory:

*"'God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world.'"*

That is fine; it seems to sing; but it is not right. I may not be very wise—and yet I think I am. No, it is not right."

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The strain of talking so long brought on the racking cough again; a fleck of bloody spume stood on his lips.

"Yes, I'm right," he said, and smiled, "though I know I'm only a simple old man with no education at all."

The old prospector rose to arrange the bedding in the top bunk, leaving Jack before the fire sunk in one of his customary reveries, inseparable from glowing embers and a pipe gone out. A night breeze came down Pentateuch and strewed the hearthstone with dying sparks. The whisper of it soothed him like a lullaby; and he must have fallen asleep in the warmth and shadowed flicker.

There came a knock on the door. Of all the lonely spots in the world! There came a firm, unhurried knock on the door. Or did Jack dream it?

Olmond opened it and stood peering out into the darkness, his bowed shoulders against the jamb. Jack thought to make out the shadowy form of a tall man with a burro beside him. The stranger's voice was low-toned and full of affection and tenderness as he spoke to the old man.

"No, I must be moving on," he said. "But I wanted to stop and tell you, pardner, that I'm sure you will strike ore, if you haven't already struck it to-night."

Something in the voice seemed to draw Jack to the door.

"Who are you?" he asked, beyond his own volition. "Where have I seen you before?"

In the moonlight it was the face of a young man. He turned and looked upon Jack with a penetrating sweetness; Jack felt strangely comforted.

"I'm not a stranger here. I'm often a sojourner in these mountains. I have just come over the Pass."

Jack started up sleepily, rubbing his eyes.

"Who was—?"

He saw the venerable face above him take on a strange

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light as though kindled by his own expression of bewilderment.

"I thought some one knocked?"

Olmond smiled and pressed his shoulder.

"Let him enter, whoever he be. But even a young man sleeps badly in one of my chairs."

XVII

MORNING

She doeth little kindnesses
Which most leave undone or despise:
For naught that sets one heart at ease,
And giveth happiness or peace
Is low esteemed in her eyes.

—*Lowell.*

THE Mason household was assembling for breakfast in the white, pretty room looking out of French windows over the miles and miles of green parkland. It was a very cheerful room with the sun shining through it that mellow way.

Mr. Mason arrived at the table first and sat down in his usual place at the head. He was a broken man of fifty, although he looked seventy; for his hair, abundant and left fairly long, was perfectly white, and his face had the bleached emaciation of age. Over his eyes there was always a pair of dark-colored spectacles which made his high-featured, aristocratic face look still more colorless. Its general expression was benignant, and the square jaw had been impassive. As he sat there waiting, and apparently listening, his chin in his hand, one might notice a peculiar blank, wandering look on the once fine face. With a purposeless tenacity the darkened eyes would follow the cracks in the varnished floor, the mote in the ray of sun shining upon his plate; they would even watch for minutes the hands of the tall clock—plainly an heirloom—and his ears would seem to strain for a break in the steady tick.

A ruined mind. . . . Yes, a ruined mind; but one both

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profound and brilliant once. He had been sent to Congress from Virginia before he was thirty, had married, was happy, strong, ambitious. The crisis came; his father, of whom he was the only son, died; and a deficit of hundreds of thousands of dollars was found in his tobacco business. He had been crushed by the shadowy trust. What to do? Why, he was a Mason! Like Walter Scott he set out to repair his fortune by writing books, essays full of the trenchant understanding that was in the man. He was forced to leave Congress; the load of debt pressed too cruelly. And then it was he began to emulate Balzac; would write the whole first draft of a volume in sixty consecutive hours, torturing his jaded brain to continued activity by constant draughts of black, bitter coffee. . . . Like Balzac, he paid his debts; and, like Balzac, he almost paid them with his life. His wife died. He could not bear the memories clustering about the stately Colonial homestead; it, too, he sold, and strove to bury his grief with himself, in unceasing toil in the darkened, miniature library on the Trevett.

Margaret had been ten when her mother died. Mr. Mason was a devoted, loving father to his motherless children; but he was buried for days at a time in his furious labor away from them. It was wonderful; but Margaret had practically raised herself and her baby brother, and taken care of her father, too. Yes, she was strong and calm and controlled. One may see how this calmness and strength was developed.

"I don't care," Mr. Mason had said tenderly to the child, "if my little daughter is not highly educated and clever, if only she is sweet and good. . . . And she is—like her mother," he would add, kissing the fresh young mouth.

Yet, quite by herself, as do the geniuses, she had learned to make a pianoforte sing and weep and tremble. And she had turned over all the books in her father's library. No, she was not ignorant, if she had called Trevett Falls pretty,

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There came a day of reckoning, a day when the caffein-poisoned frame collapsed, and even the intrepid will behind it. That morning, after days and weeks of the agony of insomnia, Spenser Mason was found in his bed by his sixteen-year-old daughter, paralyzed in the whole upper portion of his body, his once powerful mind like unto that of a little child; in addition, he was almost blind. Ah, now came the heroism in earnest! It must have taken heroism indeed to look on that wreck of a man, and that man her father! Margaret had him taken to Denver; she studied to be a trained nurse in the hospital where he was, just to be near him. The doctors whispered "asylum," but the daughter's care won through. One of Mr. Mason's arms remained partially paralyzed; he carried it ever afterward tucked between the buttons of his coat. The stricken frame recovered part of its former vigor—a pitiful part, it is true; but the man's mind remained, as has been said, like that of a little child or a very old man.

There he sat, listening, and looking at the motes of the sunbeams. . . .

Harry entered with a proud clump of new shoes and threw himself directly into a chair and upon the canteloupes. The son was closely followed by the daughter, a rose glowing in each cheek. Health radiated from her like an essence; there was vitality in her very step on the matting, in her white neck, delicately full like the Venus de Milo's, in the rounded chin that was a hint salient—like her father's—and in the shoulders that were broad for a woman and beautifully modeled for the sculptor. In addition, there was that cleanliness about her that breathed the ozone of a recent plunge in a mountain stream, and was redolent, too, of a purely feminine odor that emanated indifferently from her hair, her neck, her arms, her whole delicious personality. One felt that there was stamina and fine vigor about Margaret; and one had only to look into the wide-set blue eyes that seemed so

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deep to know that she was, as her father said, all that is good and sweet.

"Good morning, daddy dear," she said, kissing her father affectionately on the forehead and setting the morning paper before him. It was yesterday morning's paper in Denver.

"Eh—ah—oh, yes, Margaret," said the old man, waking from abstraction. He had a strange fashion, when thus aroused, of conversing with himself in a low tone, a running comment, half-whispered, of his own petty doings.

"Here are your spectacles and the *News*, daddy," resumed Margaret, speaking loud and distinctly, as if to the deaf, gently removing the dark glasses to put the others in their place.

"Yes—yes . . . Half past seven? That clock must be slow. I've forgotten to wind it up. Hilda has lost the key, and I have to wind it up with the pinchers. . . . I've forgotten to wind my watch. . . . No, I haven't, either. . . . Canteloupe for breakfast, eh? A knife—a knife—what has Hilda done with the knives? . . . Ah, thank you, daughter."

Margaret had hardly sat down between her father and Harry when Kenneth came in, looking very statuesque and handsome in his flannels and black ties, very much the gentleman and the athlete, even with the sling on his arm. He smiled an affable good morning at Margaret as he sat down opposite her. It was significant of Mr. Mason's infirmity that Kenneth did not think of addressing him. And now, last of all, came Violet, with a bright greeting for every one—except her brother, at whom she did not deign to glance. Kenneth stopped in the middle of a dissertation on the Iceland poppies in front of the house, and moodily ate his melon.

Violet prattled on indiscriminately to Margaret and young Harry, next whom she sat. The side of the dainty profile toward Kenneth might have been rose leaves in ice. Mr. Mason's monologue continued.

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"Griddle cakes? I'll have a cake. Where are the cakes? Here they are. Hot cakes are bad for my stomach. I ought to eat toast. . . . I've lost my place in the paper—always lose my place in the paper. Splendid editorials this man writes—what's his name? I've forgotten—" The monotonous murmur died away.

"Daddy, here's your cocoa," pursued Margaret, distinctly.

Hilda, a new and obviously unlinguistic Swede, waited on the table, awkwardness impersonate. She was in the middle of her first month of Margaret's *régime*.

"Your cocoa, daddy! You'll tip it over if you aren't careful! Push it farther on the table for him Hilda. And your cakes, daddy."

"Certainly—to be sure—to be sure."

Indeed, Margaret's attention was so divided between her father's plate, Harry's boisterous table manners, and her new maid that it was a marvel when she found time to eat at all. For Mr. Mason was as apt as not to retire from breakfast without having eaten a morsel, if each article of food were not repeatedly presented to his attention. Harry was waking the echoes with laughter at the shamefaced Patsy, whom he was trying to coerce, by anything from cajollery and sugar to threats and slaps, into performing tricks similar to those of Jack Day's pony. And the fox terrier was the image of shame, hang-dog, limp, futile; he did not want to do tricks. He took the opportunity during one of Margaret's brief arraignments of her erring brother to creep under the table and snuggle against the protecting skirts.

"Oh, now, Margaret, I wasn't hurting him at all, not one bit. Patsy's only mad and contrary."

"Never mind, Harry," smiled his sister. "Eat your breakfast like a soldier. Soldiers don't have time to answer back—nor to train little dogs to tell their ages. Patsy's not a horse, brother."

Last of all, the clumsiness of Hilda as she attempted to

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wait on the table would have driven a— Very uncomfortable in her starched white apron, the Swedish maiden stood off from the table, making frightened dabs at it ever and anon. As the result of an excessive deference her awkwardness became a thing beyond expression. She presented the syrup to Mr. Mason when he wanted the sugar, and at inopportune times delivered herself of a broken apology for some forgotten delict of etiquette.

"Ye-s-s" was her staple answer to all questions. "Ye-s-s" was her trusted defense against the possibility of mistakes; it was her linguistic sword and buckler, her guardian, guide, and stay. She let fall a saucer, upset the salt. The crystal sugar bowl she handled with exaggerated solicitude, as if it were a glass mortar-shell which might explode at the slightest jar. And she brushed the crumbs into Kenneth's lap instead of into the tray, finally retiring to the cuisine with a gasp of unutterable thanksgiving.

At length Mr. Mason rose from the table, silent as a Sphinx; and Margaret begged to be excused to bundle the lingering Harry off on his Shetland to the tiny, white-painted district school, three miles down the valley. Brother and sister, side by side, ate their breakfast without uttering a word. Kenneth secured the newspaper with his long arm and stared at it throughout in apparent oblivion. Violet surveyed him covertly for a while; a big tear splashed down upon her plate. She choked and left the room. Kenneth leisurely finished his breakfast, and then he, too, went out.

Margaret was among her lettuce in her garden at the back of the house. He came up to the gate and leaned upon it, watching her. She was looking up and down the rows, occasionally stooping to grub with a pair of ragged leather gloves; and she did not see him. On her head was a disreputable old felt hat, and her lips were parted upon the warm burden of a song he did not know, but which wandered among his heart strings in that lovely

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contralto. Here was a girl who was happy under an old felt hat, in the sunshine, 'way out here in God knows where! Kenneth, for all his Virginia ancestry, was a New Yorker of the New Yorkers; and he reasoned as they did, a pervert logic of pitiful uptown snobbishness which forgets the kinship of all flesh.

Was she playing a game with him, the scion of an old family, and of considerable wealth even for Manhattan? Was that childlike indifference to him as a man and a possible husband a pose, or a part of an ingenuous nature and unwitting feminine charm that maddened him? Kenneth had seen so much of female machinations in his own class that he was blind as far as discernment of the genuine from the false is concerned. In his world nothing was genuine. Pity the plutocrat!

But stay! She was his second cousin: her family was as good as his own. That did not alter a point in his mind as he stood there, marveling at the effect this girl had upon him. No woman had ever exerted such an influence before. She was scheming for his money, no doubt. Pity the snob! New York has a gold piece set back of a green iris for a crystalline lens. It sees with gilt as a color standard; it thinks in terms of bank balances. A being who prefers the actual and views with passive indifference the tinsel panoply of the "elect" is to New York an enigma. Even if he place full credence in Margaret's attitude, Kenneth could not imagine a member of the fair sex who would remain long averse to his splendid self. This girl smiled into his eyes and called him cousin; and when she looked away it was patent he was no longer in her mind. Pity Antinous!

She was wearing a blouse with a Dutch neck, and he had a splendid profile view from where he stood of the pure curve of chin to throat and the rich vitality of the white neck. The upper part of her face was hidden, but her mouth was wonderful in its clear sculpture—a vivid Cupid's bow in clean-cut lines of character! And,

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tracing lines, Kenneth, if you will—did you ever see anything finer than the long lines of her limbs and back as she stooped above those prosaic vegetables? An Atalanta, with a lovely indrawn curve of the back, a virginal breast deep with vitality, and arms half-bared that look as though new-molded in a full, round die from purest cream. She raised her head, and he had a shadowed vision of the wide, dreaming eyes, painting the substance of her dream upon the snow of the heights soaring away above Trevett.

Ye gods, what a throat! He felt if he opened that gate he would inevitably seize her in his arms. There was something in that sweet, girlish personality which acted like an anæsthetic to his New York logic. It swayed his senses, too, like a song—he, who had enjoyed much pleasant experience as an infallible conqueror of the sex, himself unconquered. He realized, watching the girl there, that diagnosing a case is not curing it. And he was surely in love!

Margaret turned her head and encountered his eyes with a smiling little nod. He veiled them with his lashes to hide what they must express.

"I'm not at all presentable," she laughed, holding up a weed, and showing a segment of white teeth in carmine. "Won't you come and make mud patties with me?"

Pure coquetry. No. Yes. Was it? The eyes on him were laughing, inviting, ingenuous. Gods, what a throat! A game or not; what did he care?

"Delighted, I'm sure," he replied, amiably, striving to keep the note of repressed passion out of his voice.

He flung open the gate and advanced down the rows to her, clenching his free hand in his pocket until the nails bit into his flesh. When he reached her there was another dream in her eyes and another song on her lips.

"You are a dreamer, are you not, Margaret?"

"I believe that's why I enjoy being awake so much,"

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she smiled, "because I know I'm coming to the dreams again."

"Sometimes you do dream wide awake, don't you, cousin?"

"I think I do a great deal of that—too much so, in fact. The poor old piano is almost distracted with recording my explorations into strange worlds."

"You play delightfully—your dreams. Why don't you write them down in music language? They would be famous."

"I should like to learn," she said, wistfully earnest. "And to play better. But there is no one to teach me here, and the dreams are never the same."

"What do you dream of, cousin?"

"Oh, it's too big a world to describe, Kenneth. And a terrible jumble. When I was a child it used to be elves and fairies, and knights in flashing armor on champing chargers, and ladies on white palfreys. My repertoire of dreams was larger then."

"What is it now? Prince Charming—on a cow pony?"

She gazed up at him innocently. That skin! It was a fabric shaming any satin that ever was woven, a clear film showing forth the changing prism colors of her soul.

"No. Mostly of cities with towers, and the mountains, and the streams, and the sea. I've never seen the sea, and I so long to see it and sail out on it. . . . No, Kenneth; tell me about Prince Charming. Who is he? I'm not very wise, and perhaps I'm too much of a child to dream anything worth a grown-up's while. It's mostly of a world where Daddy could understand everything again, and know how people love what he has written, before—"

"Child," murmured Kenneth, on a low note of his rich voice, "would you like to go across the ocean, to Europe, everywhere, and see those dreams come true?"

"Indeed I should," she cried, clapping her hands, from which she had removed the grubby gloves. She drew off the disreputable hat, and the sun kissed her masses of

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soft brown hair. "But Daddy wouldn't enjoy wandering about. It bewilders him. And I'm happy here, with him."

"Did you never dream—of making some man's dreams come true?"

Her eyes were wide wells of wonder raised to his face. Those parted lips, that throat! His madness sang through his veins, a sharp pain, with a warmth like spiced wine. His arm was about her, pressing the lissom form to him; his kiss upon her mouth was like fierce, biting flame.

"I'm crazy about you! What have you done to me, you little mountain girl? Oh, I don't care if you *are* playing—"

He looked down at her suffused face, and marveled at its dazed expression and startled eyes. Her hair was a bank of flowers.

"Child—child, I know you say you don't love me; but I love you, and you can't hold out long. You've made me mad, I tell you, and you must pay up some way. I'll show you the way and make you happy. And the whole world shall be yours."

She recovered and tried to extricate herself, flaming. He smothered her resistance and crushed the warm mouth again and again.

"Oh!" she cried. "I'm afraid of you. You are hurting—me."

Kenneth was, in the last analysis, a gentleman. He released her instantly. She stood before him with hanging, lovely head, her cheeks and neck one riotous billow and flux of blushes.

"What would you have me do?" cried the man. "I love you so that—"

"No," she said, raising her head with a swift transition to tranquil virgin dignity. "I don't believe you love me. And when you do that it makes me almost—hate you. You wouldn't have me hate you?"

"No," he pleaded, "not that. Never that. I—I couldn't stand it."

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"And I don't like to hate anybody. It hurts *me*."

"Don't you even wish to learn to love me back, you snow maid?"

She did not answer, her pretty brows knit with puzzlement and trouble.

"Oh, what is going on in that adorable head of yours, child?"

"It's in my mind that I—don't wish you to kiss me, and—I don't want to be—unkind."

He caught her hand, but she quietly drew it away.

"Kenneth,"—the wide Madonna eyes looked steadfastly into his own, with a serious gleam in them—"I don't understand you at all. Perhaps I'm very ignorant, and only a little, little child. No one but Daddy ever kisses me, and—never that way. And I know he loves me. But you say *you* love me; and then you act as though you didn't at all—as if you wanted to hurt me and make me cry."

"Girl, girl, don't you know how it is with me? I wouldn't hurt you for the world. I love you so much I—I am mad to—"

"I don't like your way of loving."

"Is there anybody else?"

The wonder and question on her face showed clearly that she did not comprehend his meaning.

"You are very fine and big and strong. But I'm not fond of you when you are rough with me. I—I am ashamed. For a moment I wanted to—to strike you."

He turned away, his handsome face a pale cast of pain. She put her hands on his sleeve.

"Oh, Kenneth, I'm sorry. It wasn't I. It was something wicked from outside, I'm sure." Her eyes filled with tears to see the look on his averted face. "I wouldn't hurt you for anything. You are my cousin, and I like you very much."

He did not respond, but swallowed with a dry throat and looked at her with darkened eyes. His very mortal

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fiber quivered at her nearness, and the innocent pleading of the wide child eyes made him dizzy. He would—

She smiled up at him and pouted her cupid's-bow mouth with a merry twinkle in her blue eyes.

"Please—" she begged. "And won't you kiss me and make up?"

Uptown logic awoke with a start. Aha, she had been playing with him from the beginning!

"So," he said, his good-natured leonine mastery returning to him—and his vanity, "you've changed your views?"

But he laughed and kissed her.

"No," said she, "I haven't changed my views."

"Why did you ask me to kiss you, then?"

"Because," she replied, calmly, "you are my cousin, and I had hurt your feelings."

"A cousin?" Vanity and New York logic took a sudden slump before that grave, girlish regard. "Not at all because I'm I?"

"Oh, yes," with a falling intonation that was the quintessence of sweet indifference. "I like you very well—when you kiss me—*that way*."

"Margaret," he declared, puzzled, "you are the first girl I ever—knew who didn't like to be kissed—that *other way*."

"Indeed!" she retorted, with candid maiden satire and a dazzling smile. "You have been extraordinarily fortunate—in your previous experience. I'm sorry to shake your faith in pleasant theories."

This beautiful innocent was a constant source of surprise. Her eyes were laughing at him; he felt somehow that she read him from the vantage of a richer intelligence, in spite of her youth and inexperience. She read him; and the blood came slowly into his face.

"You are a strange little girl—with your kisses and your theories and your dreams," he said, trying to smile.

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"Yes!" she laughed over her shoulder. "Now I must go and dream with Hilda over this week's baking."

His eyes followed the girl's retreating figure.

"You are beautiful—wonderful, my child," he murmured. "A child! And I think I must be half sick. Those eyes! How they see!"

He tried to work over some papers in Mr. Mason's library, then got a book and started to read in the hammock.

But he was restless and unhappy. He wandered about Margaret's poppies and mariposa lilies and wild roses in front of the house. Then he growled something that sounded very much like an imprecation and set off moodily up Trevett, his bare head toward the ground.

By the brink of the misty cauldron of the falls he came upon the object of his search, and was so taken aback that he tried to steal away unnoticed. But something drew upon him to return; something contracted and hurt in his own throat. There lay Violet, his sister, his whole family, crumpled at length in the long grass, face buried in her arms. All that was best in the man rose to the surface; he might never have been selfish and weak and unfeeling.

"My little sister!"

He knelt down and lifted her on his powerful right arm, and felt her tears on his face and her arms around his neck.

"Oh, Kenny, Kenny!" she sobbed. "You're all I've got, and I do love you so. It breaks my heart to have you scold me and be unkind. I know, I know—I was horrid to you for treating him so, after he—but he deserves it all—and—and—you were right to scold me. I hate him—yes, I do,—*hate* him. And I *do* love you, Kenny; I do, I do!"

He kissed her and started to carry her home like a child. Something swelled within him: he and Violet must never quarrel and be so unhappy again. Margaret did not care

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for him; she was very kind, but she did not care. How he had wanted her ever since she had met them at the way station when they came for their visit a month before! Margaret was good to everybody; and she was everything that he was not, he thought bitterly. Never before had his life seemed so hollow to Kenneth; he might have had his world on that one arm. He brushed through the fragrance of the willows, carefully shielding his sister's face. And she looked up at him, loving and humble, with humid eyes. Humble! Could this be Violet? He was almost frightened.

"Everything's all right, little sister. *My* own little sister, who belongs to *me*."

And he crooned to her in his deep voice as he walked along, as one would do to a child.

Violet, awaking in her white bed that morning, before her affection for her brother became the dominating element in her nature, had been full of an overwhelming yearning and pity for Jack. With one soft arm across her eyes as she lay, she pictured him breakfasting by lamp-light with coarse hinds who gorged in surly silence and clumped out to their labor like the brutes themselves.

The "coarse hinds" would hardly have felt flattered by her mental vision, which, unfortunately, would be only too true of many cow camps and miners' boarding-houses. There were elements about the Sleeping Seven which differentiated it from other crews of the plains and mountains. If she had glanced in at the door of the Sleeping Seven cook-house she would have seen why. There was a flame of youth there, not yet snuffed out by toil, and—circumstances. There was Sandy Hallowell, who ate with them early in order not to disturb his family; and Sandy had a fund of shrewd Scotchisms that never ran dry. There was Bum McMillan, who said little, it is true, but when he pleased could set the long table in a roar. There was the volatile Frenchman, Tabary, who

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was constantly engaging in exciting discussions about things in general with a cynical McKenna, who lashed him into such a voluble fury of Gallicisms at times that the whole table rocked with laughter. They laughed, too, at the solemn attempts of Desperate Scotty as peace-maker. And there was the sunny, rollicking Jack himself, whom it was a cure for sore eyes to see among his fellows. No, these particular "coarse hinds" would have felt grievously misjudged. They would have vowed themselves superior to the habitués of Madame de Staël's salon, had they ever heard of such an institution. The cups were thick, the coffee was black and bitter, and there was oilcloth for a table-covering, but—oh, that feast of reason and flow of soul!

XVIII

DAMON THE MALEFACTOR

The Philistines be upon thee, Samson.

—*Judges.*

"I'LL tell you what's the matter with you ginks," fumed the marshal. "You're a passel of lumberin' louts that fall over your own feet whenever you see a bunch of sage rustle. Hear a bull beller in the bottoms and you're ready to run like coyotes. Jack rabbits, that's what!"

As seen in this fit of general criticism, the marshal was a small, wiry man with a long, drooping mustache over a chin like a ferret's. He contracted his gimlet eyes on the members of his posse in the essence of disfavor. There were five of them, and they were unsaddling some very jaded-looking horses in a corral of the Sleeping Seven. The marshal whipped off his double-cinch and the Navajo under it, and passed a tentative hand over the smoking back of the famous white horse. Pink Curtin, the deputy marshal who had come up with him from New Mexico, twitched his pony's head so that she turned out into the corral.

"See here, Leary," he gritted, ill-temperedly. "All this palaver about jack rabbits and coyotes is laid on too thick. As a hot-air merchant you're a pippin. I'd also back you against B. J. Wefers or any other sprinter in the world—if that gun-fighter man showed as much as his bean along the sky line. Here, son," he interpolated to Sandy Hallowell's youngest, "run get me some Sloan's—that's a good kid. The mare's shoulder is on the blink.

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... And, say—do you know?—if you'd only hold that warble of yours folks'd think you were some *marshal*. Steely eyes, alert trigger finger—just like in a nickel novel—and a brain as addled as a punk-fed groundhog's."

"You don't mean that, now, boy." Leary's thin lips were smiling, the eyes on Curtin like steel points. "You know you don't. Say, do *you* want to qualify for the heavenly home with six hunks of lead in your already crowded system. I'm frank, *I* am. *I don't*."

"That's *it*," sneered Pink Curtin. His hair was not pink, it was a fiery red; even his eyes had red rims, and he was long and cadaverous. The Curtin jaw was a good one, though, for all the loose, gangly length of him. They adjourned presently to the bunk-house, where they assailed in turn the tin basin and fragment of looking-glass on a post outside. It was after evening grub pile, and some of the Sleeping Seven boys lounged on the bench by the door, formulating a series of irritating queries. The dignity of United States Marshal meant nothing to them. The inflated mannerisms of the personage himself were too tempting.

"How long a rope you going to use?"

"Mebbe we'd better get out that crate Slovenly Peter kept the catamount in," was Bum McMillan's suggestion.

"What brand o' salt do you sprinkle? I'm told jail birds is right particular."

Sandy Hallowell put in an appearance around the corner of the bunk-house.

"Are ye the marshal?" he inquired of Pink, who was spluttering into the basin, his fiery crest erect like a cock's comb.

"No. *Him*." Pink indicated the marshal with a long, erratic digit which was vocal of supreme contempt for that it aimed at. Leary was plastering flat a mouse-colored head of hair before the bifocal mirror. He shifted his difficult squint to Hallowell.

"Yep," he said, crisply, "I'm the marshal. P. G.

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Leary, on special warrant from the Gov'ment pendin' arrangements with Mexico."

"Aweel, marshal," began Sandy, not knowing what to make of the atmosphere of self-importance and external contempt which swirled about the marshal like an uneasy halo, "they tell me ye're looking for a main-mean Mexican outlaw. What's he a-fashing over the border? The States hae always seemed to me the fire to Clan Diaz's frying-pan. But—ye don't give us ae deescription of yon wild mon, marshal. What is 't he looks like? We're wamefu' o' curiositie."

"I'm dog-tired of givin' descriptions," snapped Marshal Leary. "That's flat. Every stick-in-the-mud in two states and three territories is hankerin' round after 'decriptions.' I'm sick of 'em. I'm bailin' my own water to pour down the burrow, thankin' ye—kindly."

Leary's eye, cunning at the last, rankled as it lit upon Jack Day, in the middle of the bench. Jack good-naturedly removed his pipe and returned the stare.

"Aha, there you are!" bit off the marshal, flinging down the piece of comb and thrusting out his lean, sun-caked neck, his eyes twinkling in sudden malice. "Aha! The only party that ever give me a decent wor-rd picture of the subject matter of this pur-suit. All the others want to know if he had green hair."

"To be naïve is to be misunderstood," smiled the young man.

"To be—? Wh— Oh, yes. Sure. I agree with you-all there. I ain't from Missouri. I'm from Texas."

"Yes, and you ought to be back in El Paso, running the hash-house where you belong," growled Pink. "You don't waste any time looking for *outlaws*. Oh, no! You're keeping your eye peeled for notices of the reward. When you see one, you rip it down and look round sneaky for the nearest ash barrel or chipmunk hole. Five thousand dollars. Huh! You want it all yourself."

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"Well, you misbegotten, lop-eared, prickle-headed son of a pie-eyed army mule! Don't *you*?"

Followed an elaborate attempt on the marshal's part to ignore his vitriolic deputy.

"I know," he proceeded, "all you folks through New Mexico and Colorado is agin ex-tra-di-tion. O' co'se, between you and me, we all know the Mex authorities won't give that feller decent trial. Pouff! They'll plug him in the back an' say he tried to run. The 'law of flight,' un'stand? But I can't let that cut no figger with me, gentlemen. It's my *dooty* to run Nichols to earth, dead or alive."

"You might be equal to running a *dead* man to earth," but Pink was doubtful.

Leary still ignored him. With a stagy assumption of keen observation the marshal was watching the flow of opinion and sympathy pass over the faces of the Sleeping Seven crew. Extradition? In his former vocation of innkeeper he had gathered mechanical shrewdness enough to know when an "Oiler" had enough dust to pay for his "ham and"; but it was only an uneasy instinct which made him feel now that he had probably ruined, by this gratuitous exposition of Mexican customs, any chance of running upon the outlaw's traces by "good-will," at least among the Sleeping Seven outfit.

"Give a man up to be pig-stuck and tortured by a bunch of miser'ble greasers? A white man? I *guess* not." Turp Entine had "punched" along the Sonora line.

"That's it!" cried Pink, bristling. "And what the hell business is it of yours, may I ask?"

Turp arose from the bench, his knuckles and brow knotted. Jack yanked him back by the slack of his belt.

"That's all right, Turp"—soothingly. "Don't you know yet that you have to make allowance for red hair? It's constitutional," and thus turned the matter into a general laugh.

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"I got another little side of this question to present to you-all, gentlemen," began the marshal.

"And I've got a hunger like Murphy's goat," gritted Pink, still pale with anger.

"Run along, then, you goop," snapped the marshal. Their association had been a continual wrangle; each complained fluently of the other upon every occasion that offered. The sun was going down on their wrath as usual; the mountains cast their long shadows over the Sleeping Seven. Pink slouched toward the cook-house, grumbling.

"This man," resumed the marshal, casting a look around as if he expected to see a demon with horns and a tail emerge from the shadowy entrance of one of the stock-sheds near by, and lowering his voice, "is a regular he-devil. You'd call me a liar if I told you how many sheriffs and deputies he's laid out. One of 'em's been a-stretchin' for a month in the Santa Fé hospital," he added. And then, with the same impenetrable gravity: "That's why the President appointed *me*. Nichols was too much for him to handle."

"*You* were too much for the President's sense of humor," muttered Jack.

The front of the bunk-house rocked with laughter in the sinking dusk.

"What? I didn't hear what y' said." The marshal was bewildered by the brusque uproar. His eyes narrowed suspiciously on Jack.

"Young feller, you know too much." Leary was non-plussed. Suddenly his face lighted up. "Drat it all, I know what. You—you're *drafted*."

"Oh, come now, marshal!" remonstrated Jack, startled.

"Yes," gestured the marshal, pleased with his revenge and obdurate, "you'll take the oath after I've snacked."

"Say—"

"*Drafted*—that settles it." The wiry figure waved a

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hand airily and stepped off to the lighted cook-house, where his men were having a benighted meal. Sandy accompanied him.

"Well, I'll be—"

"*Drafted*," Bum finished for Jack, and doubled into a mute heap on the bench.

"What's eating you, Mr. Deputy? Have you hocked your gun?"

"Gee, I wisht I was going on this comic op'ry party, too!" from Turp.

"This thing isn't quite so funny as you think, boys." Jack's manner was serious. "Do you know who this Nichols, this outlaw, this filibuster, this gunman, is?"

A pause, sobered by the man's expression.

"No. Who?"

Only Bum was watching Jack with curious eyes.

"Look around you."

An interval, during which every one scanned the features of every one else.

"Black Steve! Where is he?"

Dead silence. Some one knocked out the ashes of a pipe.

"I did have it in my system to wonder," at length remarked McMillan, "why you march up to that evil-tempered beast at supper the day of your Blennerhassett trip, and say, 'Good evening, Steve; let's be friends.' It gave even us Democrats a horrible turn—"

"No. I knew you wouldn't understand—it's all against the grain for me to go on a manhunt *now*. You wouldn't—"

"He *un homme brave*," interjected Tabary.

"He's a wiz at the pasteboards, and he plays a straight game, too," from Humpy Nisson.

"But do you *like* him?" was Jack's ultimatum.

A long silence.

"He *diffaigent*," puzzled the Frenchman, "*il y a la dernière semaine*. He *diffaigent* now—somet'ing— *Oui*,"

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he finished, brightly, with a flash of white teeth, "I lik heem."

"Why?" Jack peered at Pete, then put a hand on the little man's knee.

"Why? *Je ne sais*. He not call me 'French-ee,' *il y a dix jours*. He give me bran'-new riata. 'That all right, Pete,' he say, an' smile; 'I go to town short-lee.' He want be frien's; he *le bon camarade*."

Jack pressed the knee, surprised and pleased.

"How about *you*, Bum?"

The dark, handsome face smiled cynically.

"Well, Jack, I'm not what one would term enthusiastic. But then I'm not warm-hearted like little Petrarch here," with a hint of patronage in the cool, modulated voice. "I know one thing about Black Steve, though."

"What's that, Bum?"

"It was only last night, Jack. We were all in our bunks tearing it off, and you were over by the table under the light reading in one of your fool-books. I guess it was your friend Dante. D'you know, you ought to wear a mask? I could see everything you were reading right in your face. It kept me awake, confound you! I lay there and watched and watched, and cursed you and envied you. I wish sometimes I could crawl into another world odd whiles like that.

"And then — I saw a head at the window, some one looking in. For a full minute it stayed there, peering into the corners, turning from side to side, listening. Then it disappeared, and Black Steve came in. He stood by the door a moment, quite filling it up with that bull frame of his, listening, listening, watching. The turn of his head reminded me of a wildcat. He shut the door and came over to the table, sat down opposite you, and started to roll a cigarette, those black eyes of his on your face the whole time. Finally you woke up.

"'Hello, Steve!' you said, and smiled. Confound it,

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Jack, when you do that it makes a fellow forget what a hard-bitten, chopper-jawed, obstinate cuss you are! It's like some young girl coming out of a daydream with her whole warm, pure young soul in her eyes."

"Oh, come now, Bum," demurred Jack, confused, and glad of the darkness in front of the bunk-house, "I didn't know you were a poet. They are great at imagining things that aren't, you know."

"Don't interrupt," said Bum. "It's rude."

"Well, you put up your book and took the makings from him across the table. Then you settled back, and had a bicker session, talking low so as not to disturb the rest of us hibernating animals. But you seemed to be having a good time—swapping yarns, I guess. Anyway, I think I must have dropped off, for when I looked out again you were reading and he had his elbows on the table, smoking and watching you. He'd put his hat on the table in front of him, and I was thinking what a fine-looking brute he was, with that dark, square-cut face of his, that inky mop of hair coming down almost into his eyes over that knot of a brow, and his shoulders hunched above the table like the frame of a derrick. 'Some *man!*' I thought; then I noticed his eyes. You know those eyes? Set pretty deep, and like a night in Death Valley. Sometimes they have a look in 'em which says 'Do this!' and a chap usually does it—quick, as if the man were the Centurion. Then they may have a devil in each of 'em—a laughing, mocking, don't-care-a-damn devil; or perhaps it's a real incarnation from the pit, a flicker of hell fire."

Bum paused; something that was half a shudder passed over his frame.

"Jack, those eyes were as soft as—as a bed of black pansies. It might have been your mother looking at you."

McMillan got upon his feet, and laughed. He was the old taciturn ne'er-do-well; that throb of feeling might never

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have sounded in his voice. The others were silent, eyes on the long, lithe, dim figure stretching out its arms in the light of the new stars.

"Me for the heather," yawned Bum, laconically, and disappeared inside.

XIX

THE MANHUNT

My valor is certainly going! it is sneaking off!

I feel it oozing out, as it were, at the palm of my hands!

—*The Rivals.*

IT was five-thirty in the morning when two men in a buckboard accosted Jack at the ford.

"United States Marshal Leary 'phoned me last night he was here. I've brought up the bloodhounds he ordered from Del Norte. Where can I see him?"

Jack pointed to the bunk-house, and gave the required information. The stranger, gray-haired and quiet under his black felt, thanked Jack courteously and leaped out of the buckboard like a boy, tossing the reins of the two horses to his companion. There were four low-hung, blear-eye brutes with drooping jowls and grotesque paws leashed behind the vehicle. Two of them were growling at each other, and the man strode around and spoke crisply to them

"They're bad children," he remarked to Jack, showing his strong yellow teeth. Sun-narrowed blue eyes in a visage lined with exposure and good humor; a close-clipped white mustache stained with tobacco juice; and—a lantern jaw as square as a chunk of emery.

"Who's that?" inquired Jack, when the stranger had disappeared into the bunk-house and he had offered the makings in exchange for comment on the roads by the other man.

"That," was the reply, with a sort of brotherly pride,

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"is the sheriff of Rio Grande County. That is Jim Arliss, and these are his dogs."

His information was enough for Jack. Arliss was famous in half a dozen states, from a time when they were but territories.

"You know," went on the man in the buckboard, "there is a saying about that a fellow has only two things to do when Arliss is camping on his trail."

"Which?"

"Two. To pull his hole in after him, or—"

"Or what?"

"Blow his brains out," with a slow smile of absolute certainty. "And Jim says he needs that Mexican reward."

"You regard it as an assured fact, then—the capture?"

"Rather. You see, there's usually a chorus along the wind when a man wakes you up at three in the morning to—'Get those dogs out of the baggage car.' By the way, there is something in your hat band."

Jack removed his Stetson; a wave of guilty color swept over his face when he saw a folded paper there with four staggering letters staring at him in pencil: "Jack." The man in the buckboard was surveying him curiously.

"I hope she is well," he said.

"Yes, I guess so," replied Jack, hardly knowing he spoke.

goodby Jack

i may not see yu agen so im wushing yu luck all good kards
and no kold dek i gess i stackd mine on miownself butt its tu late
for a new deel.

yure frend

STEVE.

A rock-ribbed cañon in the San Juan, where the voice of a torrent echoes hoarsely back from scowling crags. Nightfall, with dim lines of shadow converging from the cliffs upon motionless masses of silver spruce and willow, the cordon of Minotaur Creek through the midst, like a silver braid carelessly flung down there by the gods; and close above that shining serpent two squat evidences

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of man's presence—mud-filled log cabins with low lintels, half facing each other at a distance of a hundred feet.

At present one of the huts wore a blind aspect of non-tenancy, from the closed door to the dim disk of the dishpan hanging on a nail beside it. But something over a half-dozen weary horses were tethered to a long, well-gnawed pole along one side of the other structure, discussing the evening's oats in bowed equine silence; and the low door was open upon a recurrent flicker of ruddy light.

The repast was over, and the odor of bacon was being rapidly replaced by aroma from a group of pipes before the crackling piñon wood in the rubble fireplace.

"The devil sure is in things," resumed the grumble of Marshal Leary from its vague location in the midst. "He sure is. Just take a squint outside and see if he ain't."

"Do you mean that salon production of the Grand Painter we've just been treated to out yonder? That chromatic scale of colors He's been posting for an advertisement along the West and leaving it for us to call a sunset?" Jack was studying his superior officer; the subject was a series of surprises in human nature.

"Yessir," returned Leary, vigorously, strolling over to the door and looking out on the darkening cañon, "it's devil's glow. He wants us to stick around and feel easy in our minds about things, so he slabs around a bushel o' color and sweet smells and coolish shadow—paints it up to fool us into believin' it's a paradise of peace and holiness and transmockrified spirits. But you just take a squint at it now. He lost his grip a minute ago, or his paint ran out. It's lookin' more like it really is, a dimmish corner where the hell fire's gone out." He wheeled from the door in abrupt excitement. "Gosh! and a cabin full of sin-spattered, cowardly mud hops that don't know how a seventh day is agwine to come and—"

"Rot!" snarled Pink, from his corner.

"Aren't you feeling well, Pink?" inquired Jack, with exaggerated anxiety.

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Curtin winked at him and grinned in understanding comradeship. This was the man he had made up his mind to hate at first sight!

"Naw," said Pink, twisting his mouth up under his left ear in an unearthly grimace there in the dusk. "Naw, my brains is like a decayed lemon from long vy-gils and think sessions. I'm a-pining away because I cain't figger out how this puree of polyps is ever going to get back to Texas in time to vote again for Willie Taft and prosperity and the high cost of living. Gosh! And bacon up to forty cents! And wages down to forty per! Gee, I'm happy! Let us be jo-yful!"

"Say," objected the marshal, "ain't I goin' to be allowed to fill in my part of the argyment? You cain't get nowhere unless you let one man set out *his* side fair and square. One at a time—"

"Bustlin' of an argument!"

"Go ahead with your explanation, marshal," encouraged Jack Day.

"It's this way—as I was goin' to say—it was—as I said, the argyment is—so it—" The marshal's voice died away. He had tacked about so much on the ocean of discussion of nothing at all that he could recollect neither where the boom had last shifted with the rudder nor whither he was bound. "All right, Pink, I'll let you try on your end of it. I wish the Missus was here to argy it out with you, though."

"I ain't looking for any argument," growled Pink. "Who said I was?"

"The soul of argyment is—"

"Go ahead, marshal, eat him alive!"

"Just bend an ear to *that*, now. How many more fat-heads are goin' to butt in?"

"Say," said Pink, eager of a sudden, "how about that devil stuff of yours?" His voice sank almost to a whisper. "He may be—Black Steve—he may be—*right outside that door!*"

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It was as though an eery arctic blast had blown through the group by the fire, producing an all but audible shudder and drawing of breath. A strange crew of rabbits to be hunting the lion of the border! Pink grinned surreptitiously at the sudden qualm of human fiber he had roused.

And Jack, seeing an overpowering parallel between the present quavering of dread and the sheriff of Nottingham out after Robin Hood, burst into a jolly roar. The men near him started.

"Where's Jim Arliss?" said one.

"That's so, where is he?"

"And the dogs?"

"That's the devil of it," resumed the marshal, sinking down upon the rough bench again. "Black Steve steps into the creek down here—and ffoo! not a sign. You fellers can laugh; but if that ain't devil trail, I dunno. I used to know an ol' nigger that—"

"Oh, canteloupes!" interrupted Pink, peevishly.

"Perhaps he'll herd that gunman up here on us," suggested Jack, maliciously, watching Leary, who was peering out into the darkening gulch.

"My word, that's no dream!" cried the Englishman of the party. "My partner in a British posse in Norfo'k was linked down that-a-way. Leaned against the door of a grange-'ouse to light 'is pipe. It fell in, and the fellow jumped 'im. Cuffed 'im on the Midland tracks and 'e missed being ground up by a wicket. 'E might have—"

"I don't know what it is," observed Leary, retiring cat-footed from the door, "whether it's this mountain cold in the evenings that gives a man fancies or the fancies that give him cold, but—"

"Both," suggested Jack. "A simple reflex phenomenon of the sensory nerves reacting categorically with the cerebral centers of reflection."

"Un-hunh?" gaped the marshal, dazzled. That marveling puzzlement in the man's voice was something Jack would even do violence to Noah Webster to produce.

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"I've noticed that. Yep, on night clerk. The Missus puts me on whenever the reg'lar man goes off for his annyool spree. I don't like it none, but she'd raise hell if I didn't do just as she says. Couldn't even eat lunch 'thout tastin' brimstone. *You'll* find out some day, young man."

"What about night clerking?" queried Jack, on the trail of human material and anxious to keep Leary in the course he had started upon. This was not always easy.

"Well," replied the marshal, reminiscently, "night clerkin', like everything else—like this, for instance"—with a rapid glance doorward—"has its drawbacks. Some of the dope the guests hand out about two A.M. makes a feller wish the' was a bigger crowd around.

"I 'member one guest particular. He spent an hour tellin' me earnest about the black cat that had been settin' on the foot of his bed.

"You all know how it is, gentlemen. A black cat ain't nothing but a black cat, but somehow I ain't got no hankering to hear much about 'em in the middle of the night from a nervous duck with locoed lamps. This feller said the cat come in when the waiter brung his dinner up to the room. Then, sezze, the cat took a chair opposite him at the table an' tucked a napkin under its chin.

"Sezze, 'I ast it if it wouldn't have something—but it said naw, it wouldn't—politest cat I ever seen.'

"Now that's a great line of talk to shoot at a feller, ain't it?

"It seems this chap had tuk a trip lately to Noo York City, or maybe Houston. Anyway, he started out then to boss a lot of wops putting up a skyscraper—*right there in the lobby*. I couldn't see no skyscraper, but *he* did, all right. The' was a force of about five hundred men a-hoisting girders and stone and such, and he was the main squeeze.

"After an hour o' such drool I was feelin' pretty wuzzy.

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But then he come down again in ten minutes to hand me some stuff about the man out in the back yard that was changin' hens into horses and rubbin' black cats in his hands till they turned into purple monkeys.

"You see, I didn't mind the hens so much, but them *black cats*, the rep-e-ti-tion, I reckon, sort-a turned my stomach. When I went to the hospital they told me that feller was in the next ward, for D. T.'s.

"Got the idea? *Somebody's* got to hear whatever rot's goin' round, and it's gen'ally the night clerk. He—well, if anybody's seein' things—Gila monster eggs, blue buffaloes, pink-eyed moskeeters ten inches long—why, the night clerk—that's me—his dooty is to see 'em, too. It ain't—"

A deep, bell-toned bay from far along the mountain-side. Again and again, waxing louder in the stillness with the grumble of Minotaur for a foreground. The men sprang to their feet and gathered in speculative knots outside the cabin door. As the weird, demoniac sound of a Thing on the trail for blood gained more and more volume with nearness to the scene, not a few of the unshaven, listening faces would have been seen to blench if it were not for the dusk. Pink alone ventured a "josh" at Jack.

"Sounds like a baby bawling for ma-ma under a dish-pan," he observed.

From up the mountains, deep in timber, the pursuit seemed to wheel and roll rapidly down toward them. Nearer—nearer. And then a squat, dun shadow with a flaunt of white from its neck leaped baying from the brush, only to stop and turn its head and eyes, with the lambent greenish flame in them, backward, whence it came, in quick obedience to a whistle from the timber. It stood there, quivering with eagerness, until a square-shouldered, powerful man thrust out of the shadow.

"At a girl, Carmen!" encouraged the man, in a quiet tone that was nevertheless a trumpet note. The dog

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plunged on. The man was Jim Arliss. They hailed him lustily, but he did not turn his head.

Jim Arliss, in his old black felt, and swinging his famous .45-70 carbine. And he and the hound were both gazing askance at the door of the deserted cabin. Askance? No. The dog was scratching frantically at the panels, yapping a paroxysm of smothered bays; and the man had stepped back a dozen paces, the carbine in the crook of his arm. Arliss paid no heed to the marshal and his posse.

"All right, Nichols," he boomed, in a clear, cool voice, though his breathing was still labored. "The game's up. Step out."

Only a faint rustle came from the other side of that door for answer.

"There's no use, my friend," continued Arliss. "I'm sorry. That was clever water-dodging; none better; but the jig's up."

Not a sound from the cabin.

"Very well," resumed Arliss; and he gave an order, without turning his head, to bring him a stick of dynamite and twenty feet of fuse, capped, from the other cabin. It was a sidelight on the versatility that had made the man famous at his perilous trade of manhunter. For the cabin belonged to a prospector who happened to be elsewhere. A couple of the posse shrank visibly; but Curtin dashed inside, and they could hear him swearing and striking matches. Still that tableau before the deserted cabin, man and dog, and at that juncture the moon burst down the mountainside, flooding the valley with silver and blotches of inky shadow.

Curtin emerged with the powder, a round box of primers, and a roll of uncut fuse. He appealed to Jack Day as the only man present whom he knew to be familiar with that phase of mining.

"Fix this stuff, will you, Jack?" he breathed, his angular face a mask of eagerness. Jack glanced at the

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silent door for which the powder was destined; and his jaw hardened.

"No," he refused, curtly; and the other recognized ultimate negation when he heard that voice.

"Well," said Curtin, with a humorous, disgruntled air, "I guess, Arliss, we ain't going to do this after all."

"Come here," ordered the veteran sheriff, without shifting his eyes or the muzzle of the carbine from the door. Curtin stepped up to him; Arliss took a snap glance at the man, and appeared satisfied. "You'll do. Now hold this gun on the door."

He whipped out a knife and slashed off a twenty-foot section of the fuse, affixed a primer, and clenched it on with his strong teeth. The whole operation was completed in a trice.

"Now," said the sheriff, coolly, "who wants to put this up under the logs and light the fuse?"

Not a man moved. Arliss eyed them with passive disgust.

"Scatter," he said, evenly. "Even if you are afraid of the dark you might come in handy to pot him down if he breaks."

He watched them hurrying for their weapons and to suitable posts—not too dangerous—oh, no. The pleasant mouth above the lantern jaw curled.

"I'd do it," said Curtin, "but I ain't got the hang of—"

"What's the matter there?" Arliss exclaimed to a man in the shadow of the open cabin. Jack Day sat on his section of cordwood and vouchsafed no reply. "Sad attack of cold feet," concluded the sheriff, dryly.

"I'm not at all under orders to you," Jack retorted, calmly. "And I'm quite free to tell you that it's a devil's game you're about to play."

"Oho!" commented Arliss, surprised, but in the same dry tone. "I reckon you're right. But it's sort of a custom, my friend, when you're out for a life or a murderer."

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Arliss loosened a heavy revolver in its sheath and strode up to the door. He stood before it a moment, coolly erect, as if a bullet from a high-power rifle might not crash out through the panels from the desperate man within at any moment and send the tearing sear of a mushroom bullet into his body.

"Steve," he said to the pregnant panels, "you know me. I'm sorry for you. But I'm putting this powder in under the sill, and you'd better come out before—"

He waited a moment; there was no reply. Then he quietly stooped over the step and scooped out a hollow under the logs, thrust the powder in, arranged the fuse, and tamped down the earth around it.

"Last call," he warned the man within. No answer. He strode to the end of the fuse.

"Ready!" he shouted, in a clear tone. "Get well back of a hundred and fifty feet, and in cover! Steve, in three minutes you'll either break or you'll be—past troubling."

Striking a match, he lit the fuse, and with no show of haste took his carbine from Curtin's hands and walked toward the other cabin, where he stood in the shelter of the doorway, his steady eyes on the fatal spot. They watched the pale light sizzle slowly up into the shadow of the cabin, where it became a clear-cut sparkle of flame, like a malignant serpent drawing slowly back, spitting greenish fire as it did so.

"Ten feet!" called Arliss, for the outlaw's benefit. The relentless spark crawled on.

The door opened slowly—so slowly, and then stopped with a scant crack of six inches.

"Hurry!" yelled Arliss. "Hurry! You can make it yet!"

Every muzzle was on the door. The man was hesitating, no doubt. Now the door swung in . . . a little, fair-haired baby girl toddled out on the step, and clapped her tiny hands in delight at the sinister spark—so close.

Every man stood rooted with surprise and horror, fascinated.

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"God!" cried Jim Arliss, and staggered. The word was like a shearing crash of electricity to Jack Day. As he had never spurted in football days he tore up to that doomed little baby. With the preternatural clearness of the instant of peril that is a century, he saw the flame sputtering into the earth, and clawed at it in a frenzy; dragged it bodily from the powder with scorched hands, and hurled it a score of feet away, a blackened bit of tinder. Ah, how sharp the smell of the saltpeter was!

He turned. Arliss was at his elbow, the child in his arms. The veteran was white and shaking. Now the other men came running up, and the baby cried with terror at the sight of so many rough, excited faces.

"A close shave," commented Jack, watching the great beads of sweat which the moonlight disclosed upon Arliss's temples—watched them with sympathy, and the sheriff's working face.

"And I called you a coward!" burst out the old officer. The baby was frightened almost out of her wits. She cried for "Dadda!" heartbrokenly. Jack's attention was all on her, his rugged face with the light in it a woman's has when—

"Here! The poor little thing's afraid of you," Jack said, crossly, to those who would shake hands and utter unspeakables in praise of him. He took the little girl from the veteran and sat on the doorstep with her. The men watched him cooing to her and cuddling her in his strong arms, and something like awe was on their faces. Presently she ceased crying and lay very still, her face hidden in the shoulder of the blue flannel shirt, with the moonlight streaming over them in the door now.

Soon she raised one wee hand and took a quaint little peep from behind it up at his face. And Jack smiled.

"Dad-da!" came the joyful little cry, and she put up her baby hands on the man's unshaven jaws. He kissed her, and she began a laughing, childish prattle, which he answered in kind.

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The strain had passed. The men laughed in throaty relief.

"Shut up!" reproved Jack, mildly, so as not to frighten the baby again. And they obeyed him.

"It's cold here, kitten," resumed the young man, in that male tone that can be so tender and soothing. "Let's go over to the nicey-nicey fire."

They were comfortably established before the glowing warmth, the baby on Jack's knee, big blue eyes fastened on his face, her rosebud mouth the shape of an "o" at something wonderful he was telling her. The child's hair was like fine-spun rays of sunlight. She was a bright angel from heaven in her little white frock. There was jam on the front of it and around her pretty button of a mouth. He looked at her delightedly, and kissed her again. She wriggled with glee and cried "Dad-da."

"No, I'm not Dad-da," corrected the man; "but I'll do, will I, honey bunch?"

She wriggled some more. There was gravity in Jack's eyes; he looked into the face of Arliss by his side. Where was the mother, where was the father of this sprite of the moonlight? The sheriff understood.

"Just a minute," he said, and passed out of the door. Presently he returned with a length of frayed rope.

"Found it on the leg of the table," he explained, laconically.

"What's the answer?" inquired the marshal.

Arliss proceeded to match the rope with a shred of the same which still held to a knot on a strap about the child's waist.

"I ain't a Central Office man, nor yet a soothsayer or a prophet," drawled Pink, in consistent contempt of his chief; "but the case is clear enough to me."

"How?" puzzled.

"Why, I bet-che your own mother strapped little P. G. Leary to the table leg when she went out of a morning

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to do the washing. Only she tied him by the neck with a slip noose, he was that onery."

"That's probably correct," observed Jack, with a vague twinkle at the marshal. "Mama walked to that tunnel we saw up yonder with Dadda's dinner bucket. Dadda may be on graveyard shift and four o'clock, too."

"Yes," agreed Arliss, in a strained voice, "and if Nichols hadn't cut the rope! . . . I reckon he had supper with the baby on his knee."

"I reckon *not*," remarked the marshal, crisply. "Not *Nichols*. *He* ain't no Orphans' Home."

"Oh, well, then," snarled Pink, "how the hell are you going to explain it, you king of the nuts?"

"'Sh!" from Jack; "do you want my girly to have hysterics? Your voice isn't luscious on that stop, Pink. Anyway, I hope mama doesn't come back until I have time to get acquainted with Missy Goldylocks. . . . Honey, ah al'ays did fall for sunbeam hair!"

Her round eyes were on him, one of her chubby hands clasped around his finger. She gurgled and made some remarks in the brogue of Babyland. It meant, imperiously: Tell me another story; I like you. The young man complied, in his best manner of Doctor in Applied Nonsense. While the baby was squirming and chuckling with delight at his not very learned remarks, Logan, the sheriff's partner, arrived with the rest of the dogs. Very soon he strode in to the fireside and gazed down at the veteran's face. Virile and bronzed before, it looked strangely worn and old now, with a horror still in the kind eyes. The white mustache was no whiter than the rest of the face. Arliss was gazing at the baby girl.

"Jim," began Logan, hand on the sheriff's shoulder, "they showed me the hole at the back where he dug his way out—and the pick he did it with. Clever, wasn't it? The man's delayed us hours. He's probably on the other side of the Needle Range by now."

Arliss did not reply; he drew a hand across his brow.

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Logan stared at him, for that hand was shaking as though the man had a palsy. In the pause Logan heard and marveled at some of Jack's bizarre repertoire. The baby hung on the murmured words with that strange half-understanding, more than total understanding, that is the despair of child psychology.

"... What? You've never heard of the wuffinpout!" with a great show of astonishment.

"P'ease?"

"It's a very peculiar animal, indeed, kitten. Yes, indeedy, for it has a face like a worm—only less expression. Baby bunting should go a-hunting of the wuffinpout with me some day. Do you know how I catch her?"

"'Es, 'es! Catch mouses?" clapping her rose-leaf hands.

"Yes'm," with a profound expression of *savoir faire*, "I break a little—little hole in the ice. And what do you s'pose I put at the edge of the hole?"

A gurgle of anticipation.

"Why, I put a piece of ginger cookie—very close. She sticks her head out to smell the cookie—and I tell her this story. She laughs so hard she drops dead right there."

And Jack proceeded to relate that deadly story with great gusto. Logan turned to Arliss again.

"Are we going on to-night? What shall we do first?" he asked, instinctively disregarding the veteran's agitation.

"I'm out," replied Arliss. "I'm going back to Del Norte in the morning. If you want the dogs you're welcome to 'em."

"But—people will say you—"

"God Almighty!" ejaculated Arliss, in a tone that was true reverence, great beads bursting out on his haggard face once more. "Didn't they tell you what—?"

"Yes, but—"

Arliss held out his hand; it was trembling pitifully.

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"Hank," he said, in a strange voice, "*you* know nothing ever got my nerve before. It's gone now—clean gone. I'm going home."

The man's twitching fingers touched the baby's dress with what was awe and thanksgiving. In that moment a noted figure passed from the living pages of frontier history.

XX

THE SHEEPHERDER

... More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of.

—*The Passing of Arthur.*

THEY had him at bay. Black Steve stood among the willows by the ford, and his eyes roved over the merciless cliffs of the cañon like those of a trapped animal.

As he gazed down at the water purling past under the last slant rays of the sun he seemed to see a rugged face smiling up at him with an expression of comradeship which made his dark heart thrill, as to chords of music. When he looked away it was only to have another pair of eyes gazing at him from somewhere within himself—Madonna eyes, wide and sweet, with that look of pity—and horror, too.

And then—night was coming on; and vague shadows formed mistily in front of his eyes—phantasmagoria of bars, and clanking corridors, and dim windows. Another scene followed swiftly: a vision of himself with bandaged eyes, face to the white glare of a pitiless wall; the crash of the Mexican volley; and himself a crumple at his own feet.

He straightened his giant frame. That last vision always shot a seethe of savage hate through his veins; he was all the trapped animal again, and one most formidable. Let them come! They'd never take him alive. He slipped some more cartridges into the magazine and waited, the Winchester over his arm.

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Abruptly he began to laugh; and it was real mirth, too. What were they taking all that trouble about? Hadn't he just come up from nowhere, done a little wild work and shooting, and—pouff!—wouldn't he go back to nowhere—*nothing*? The outlaw's philosophy.

The wind brought the bay of the hounds down to him from the upper reaches of the cañon. His horse lay dead back there somewhere; and he knew he was cut off below by not one, but several posses. He had climbed painfully some distance up the sheer sides of the gorge, and had seen them toiling along the rugged lower trails. He realized there would be more men dribbling in from Mancos, besides, where the railroad was nearest. Yes, he was cut off.

The outlaw looked down at his feet. His boots were worn through, and a sharp stone had gashed his left foot. The leather was smeared with his blood, and he left tinges of it on the rocks as he walked. He laughed again, scornfully, and limped through the icy waters of the ford to the other bank, where he paused to take a drink, at length on his stomach.

"Might as well die a prohibitionist as an alkali desert," he mused, with grim humor, and sat down to wait, the rifle over his knees. The baying drew nearer; an eery sound in the dusk, with its demoniac jangle from the cliffs. The multitudinous echoes might be the shrill voices of spirits who had passed from earth thousands of years ago; for this is one of the oldest corners of the world, the land of the cliff-dwellers.

There, many hundreds of feet aloft, in its giant, mysterious niche in cliffs like battlements, sleeps one of the most ancient cities in the world, built by a civilization as old as the Pharaohs, and since vanished—no man can tell whither. It was as though the mountain had opened its granite jaws in an eternal yawn, bespeaking the stolidity of the ages, and showed its jagged teeth: the dental fabrication of man, working insectlike with trowel and

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mortise in some far Pleistocene age. From the position of the outlaw the ancient city was revealed as an enchanted medley of massive masonry—square towers, temples, and frowning walls undecayed, swimming in the last golden haze of sunset; a goblin city peopled by flitting ghosts of antiquity.

But Steve sat there with his black eyes focused on the trail, his ears atune to the nearing clamor of the bloodhounds. The ancients meant nothing to him. He had neither eaten nor slept for forty-eight hours, and his face was haggard with suffering.

A dog came baying to the other side of the stream, and stopped, breaking into a chorus of yelps. Steve got stiffly to his feet, the action showing his weariness and indifference. Three more of the dim, sinister shapes joined the first, and gazed across the stream at him with an intent, greenish flare in their eyes, like evil spirits in fiendish clamor. The bestial racket might well be Pandemonium; but the man stood there coolly, with watchful eyes. Even when the blood-lust seized upon them and they plunged into the water toward him, he did not shift his attention from the trail. For he must get them all; and the leash dog was back along that trail. He was, alas, too well acquainted with the methods of the manhunters.

When the brutes emerged, dripping, and sprang for his throat with slaving jaws, the man awoke. He dashed the stock of his rifle against the ravening skull of one after another, and they died there together, as brave as they were cruel. The one they called Carmen buried her fangs in the man's draggled boots; and then she died, too, without a whimper, her fierce brains gushing out on the rocks.

He waited, the bodies still warm about his feet. The clink of steel on stone fell on his ears from up the trail and sang in his blood like a viking war song. To the death! He stepped into the darkening willows and cocked his rifle. It was a grim sound. The hound com-

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ing down did not bay; it was as though the brute knew more than the human beings it led—that death lay in wait for them. No, it did not bay; but it whimpered as it shoved its clumsy legs back against the pebbles and tried to drag the cautious man holding the leash down to the water.

Steve knew none of these men who burst into view on horseback, peering intently ahead, their carbines half raised. This was no posse of "Marshal" Leary's; these were as stern fighters as the outlaw, and as utterly fearless, or they would never have come upon him in that way. They knew the man. They knew that one of their number must infallibly draw the first desperate shot before they could riddle the bushes and free the world of a slayer. There were a dozen of them at least, and his sharp eyes made out several who carried sawed-off riot guns. Yes, he would fire once; and then their buckshot would spatter his flesh and blood in the willows like warm red ochre. At this untimely moment, as he stood, a hard-bitten, rough parable of resolution, and saw the figures of the men in silhouette, his latest acquisition sang through his brain, along with the fever of his blood.

"Thou shalt not kill!"

"That's a fool Commandment," he grumbled to himself, the sights tinged with sunlight against the body of the nearest horseman.

The troop began to pass over the ford, still with that eagle vigilance on all about them. Two faces looked at Steve from within himself somewhere. The muzzle of his rifle shifted to the bloodhound floundering across the stream.

"A fool Commandment, Jack—but I'll give it a try."

The sharp report crashed out, and the dog turned over on its side in a gush of bloody bubbles. Steve did not see it there, for he had flung himself on his face, and by the miracle of the smokeless powder he had used the fire breath of the buckshot thundered over him. The men

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shouted as they plunged toward the spot, emptying their magazines. The cliffs echoed, harshly sonorous, and the posse dashed into the leafless swath their murderous fire had seared. The smoke wafted against their faces in acrid clouds. They tore up and down and around, their horses breast-high in the willows, and found—nothing.

"He's the devil himself!" frothed a burly ox of a man with a face like some beast of prey, raving to and fro on a white horse and blaspheming. "Five thousand dollars!—d—n the black soul of him!"

The gray dawn dissolved the buttresses and walls of the ancient Cliff Palace in a film of soft light; and the outlaw crawled painfully to the edge of a crumbling, precipitous wall and gazed over; it was five hundred feet and more straight down upon the wooded cañon with the frowning, perpendicular sides. His hollow eyes roved from one to another of half a dozen curling pillars of smoke which swam upward from the timber like streamers of melting gauze in the clear air. They were there, the enemy, and they would be looking for him again soon. For they did not believe in vanishing spirits, that hard-eyed gang who hunted down a man for gold. And the man was starving.

His mind went back to the wild five minutes of time he had crawled along on his belly beneath the plunging hoofs of horses and felt the seethe and rush of lead all about his body. That fiery storm had nicked tatters from his clothing, and he was bleeding from a score of "scratches"; but by a miracle he had emerged from the baptism of fire and maelstrom of iron-shod hoofs practically unhurt. He had left his rifle there, however, and he crawled along among the willows the better without it. He had no definite plan; it was merely the part of the man which would "never say die" that bade him squirm through the bushes and sharp snags for hundreds of yards, while the powder smoke wafted away below and only the echo of an occasional shout came to his ears. . . . How he

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happened upon that dim trail in the dwarf cottonwoods he did not know; but he paused there, seeing that it wound away upward. Besides the sear of the bullets, his knees and his hands were surfaces of raw flesh which left their traces on the rocks. A splendid trail, surely, for the bloodhounds they would bring up from Mancos in a few days! He rested a moment, and then said, quite prosaically:

"Shucks!"

Which, being interpreted, signified, "I'll follow that trail if it leads to perdition." And he did, dragging his weary limbs along the sheer ledges where there was no light to see. The cañon was now a well of inky shadow; and he might at any instant plunge over the cliffs to annihilation. This strange being laughed to himself. It pleased him to wear the Invisible Cap, no matter at what cost of peril.

It seemed hours he spent on the tortuous ascent. He had to feel every inch of the way. But at last he crawled into the keep of the ancient city, and stumbled about among the ruins. He knocked his shoulders and his head against huddled stone structures in the lightless chaos, and finally, off his guard, fell headlong into a pit which had been digged for him thousands of years before. The outlaw gathered his battered remnant of starved body and brain together in the dark, and laughed with a weird, unquenchable, saturnine humor and professional philosophy. He rubbed his singing head.

"This is good enough for me, I reckon. I ain't been so all-fired particular lately."

He rolled up his coat for a pillow, and there, on the hardest rock known, the man, starved and outworn, slipped quietly into a dreamless slumber, the blood clotting on his wounds and his bruised limbs stiffening. . . . Who knows what ancient mysteries took place in that strange pit, now the bedchamber of a blood outcast? What white-robed priesthood gibbered formulae of savage incantation

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in the altared round of that kiva? Perhaps their uneasy phantoms hovered about the intruder as he slept; but he slumbered on, like a child, and did not dream.

What a pitiful, tattered scarecrow it was which dragged itself out upon the parapet in the grim dawn! The massive frame seemed lank and broken, and whoever had seen his eyes then would have been haunted by them, so hollow, famished, and full of suffering they were. He was thinking of— He yearned so much to begin his life over again, purged of its past brutality and future fears; to begin over again and grow worthy of—; to follow that trail of right and kindness which led to— Her! . . . To whom? The man's secret, and one which made the haggard face beautiful in its human bitterness. . . . Begin again? If he even so much as set foot in the valley he would be shot down like a wild beast.

As he crouched there all his mental and physical pangs were conquered by the burning giant Thirst; and rousing, he limped about the silent, loopholed piles of masonry in search of water. His throat felt as though choked with hot soot, like the flue of an old boiler. There must be water here; how did that lost race live without it? He clambered and peered and limped from chamber to chamber, and finally, when he was almost prepared to give himself to the death of the valley, in an angle of the living rock he came upon his desire suddenly, like a vision—a gushing crystal spring which splashed with a clear note into shallow basins in the rock. He plunged his whole head into the grateful chill of it and drank to repletion. . . . But he wondered why his eyes swam as he looked down into the valley again. Hunger and the racked burden of his body thrummed into misery like a flame heating his blood to fever.

Down there they were scouring every inch of the wooded cañon floor. He watched them with glazed, indifferent eyes. All morning he saw men on horseback and on foot, circling, shouting, beating the bushes, looking for his



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body—and five thousand dollars. He did not smile now at their futility; the man was starving.

Early in the afternoon a group of horsemen gathered below the Palace, giving heed to one who beckoned and appeared intense in argument. Presently the doomed man saw every face turned upward to his hiding-place. He withdrew his head, unknowing whether he had been seen or not. Even without dogs they would be sure to note some of the blood he had left along the trail. He did not speculate on the momentary, almost cloudless drizzle which might have bathed the cañon while he slept. He wandered among the massy ruins, his fevered eyes about him, to pick the place where he would die—last.

He found it—a cubbyhole with an entrance so contracted that he had to thrust one shoulder through it first and weave his way in sinuously. He lay at length upon the floor of the square cell in which he found himself, and waited with numbed indifference for discovery. It was black midnight where he was; still as a tomb; and it might well prove one for him when they built the smudge to smoke him out. He could feel the strangling in his lungs even now. The dim square of the hole by which he had entered wavered before his eyes. . . and he must have fallen in a stupor—in that charnel house, where it is presumed the ancients immured their insane.

When he awoke it took him long to realize where he was; his first consciousness was of his parched and burning throat. Now the hole shadowed before his eyes again—dimmer, so dim that it might be a fancy of his own reflected outward upon his eyeballs. However, he dragged himself over and peered out. Moonlight. The city of the caves was bathed in it; a massive tier on tier of square hives crusted with elfin silver. He thrust his way into the light, marveling. They had not looked for him there!

Thirst beckoned him imperiously, and he limped back to the spring. He felt strangely light, and the glimmer of

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silver swam about him. Once there, he drank hugely. As he shifted one hand to get up the raw flesh pressed on something round and hard, which moved. He picked it up and scanned it narrowly; a .45-90 cartridge. An instant, and his eyes, piercing once more, gleamed in every direction; and he strained his ears. Profound silence reigned, broken only by the plashing of the spring.

No one here. But they had been here and gone away unsatisfied. For had not a manhunter crouched to drink of these same waters and lost a grisly souvenir from his belt in so doing? The haggard eyes glittered in the moonlight.

Down on the floor of the cañon all was in shadow. The wind was rustling through the willows, and the stream babbled to itself in some near-by riffles. Nothing to be seen in the general obscurity; only the pinnacles of the cliffs soared into their higher sphere of moonlight.

In the dank bottoms by the creek he stumbled over something. Stooping down, his hands encountered a rope. There, in darkness, he crouched like a hunted thing—which, indeed, he was, all the formidable instincts of the wounded lion seething into his heart. His eyes sparkled greenish, like an animal's. A rope; men; enemies; death! That was the sequence.

Presently, hearing nothing, he crawled along the rope, following it with his hands, and came to—a picket pin. He cursed in disappointment and wormed back over his traces. The sound of a horse stolidly cropping grass came to his sharp ears. He crept up like a snake and silenced the imminent snort by a hand clamped over warm nostrils, and spent silent minutes reassuring the beast, terrified by this noiseless apparition. By the last trickle of light left on that side of the world he guessed the animal was white. Where were his enemies in that dim, whispering solitude? He heard voices in his ears; then knew it was the whimpering, ragged clamor of his own hunger and faintness.

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When the horse was quiet, though still quivering with terror, he ventured to hack off some feet of the rope and twist it about the animal's nostrils. Then, abandoning all caution, he swung to the bare back and walked the horse through the willows, straining his eyes for the trail. He found it, and began to lope recklessly along toward Mancos, the fount of his enemies.

The limb of a tree crashed against his head in that narrow trail, and he reeled in his seat, seeing more lights than were ever in an earthly atmosphere. As he drooped limp and sick with nausea on the horse's neck he was aware of the semblance of three men on horseback halting him on the trail with exclamations of question and surprise. Steve set his jaw against his swimming senses and roweled his mount cruelly. One rider hurtled to the ground, and the white horse tore down the rugged trail like a witch wraith, striking fire from the rocks. Steve turned his head to glance back at the point of encounter; successive jagged flashes of a rifle, punctuated by the sharp reports. Something warm moistened his scalp and trickled down into his eyes. And he rode on like a madman, seeing nothing.

Two days. His feet were in frightful shape as he limped out of that rugged defile in the southern end of the Needle Mountains, where the prospect rolled away to a gray distance of shimmering plain, upon which the heat waves were only ceasing their fantastic dance at twilight. The outlaw, his heart full of bitterness, paused at the spring gushing out from the rocks at the mouth of the pass, and crouching on bloody knees, drank in great drafts. He did not get up again, but put his hand to the stained and dirty bandage about his head and sank down in a mute heap. He must have fainted away . . . one hundred miles at least from where he had last tasted food. That he was not dead long since is testimony to what his marvelous vitality and resolution must have been. Perhaps he was dying now.

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His senses swam back, and he became giddily aware that the sun was still setting. Some one had bathed his forehead with the cold waters of the spring and was carefully binding up his mangled feet, from which the wretched boots had been removed. There was something indescribably tender about the way this stranger was soothing the torn flesh. Consciousness sank away again momentarily. Then he opened his eyes vaguely, and they dwelt on dirty white billows of a squirming ocean rolling about the slope below him. Objects took definite shape once more, and he saw that the ocean was a great flock of sheep, weaving about in a dense mass and scouring the dusty earth. A number of active collies roved around vigilantly on the confines, uttering an occasional sharp yap at some recalcitrant ram.

He could see only the back of the man bending over his feet—a broad back covered by a woolly coat much affected by sheepmen, a skin with the wool outward. A damned shepherd, he thought, with inbred contempt, and a greaser at that!

"Say, do you know who I am?" he burst out, involuntarily.

"Yes," replied the man in a quiet tone, turning luminous eyes upon the outlaw. Sure, a greaser, with a dark, swarthy face, but somehow— Something Jack had told him once floated vaguely into the back of his mind, to be promptly forgotten.

"That I'm wanted for murder, and have five thousand dollars on my head, dead or alive!" Steve started up on an elbow, his haggard face a picture of unbelieving amazement.

The man only nodded. He drew off his sheepskin coat, and raising the giant frame carefully, settled Steve back upon it, as a cushion against the rocks.

Steve's mind, distraught by his long agony of hunger, thirst, and mortal pain, hardly noted the action. As his weakness overpowered him the blacker became his bit-

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terness and despair. It burst out from his lips in a last flood of vituperation and blasphemy. His face worked horribly; and he shook his gaunt fist at the back trail, laughing, in satanic defiance. His weakness overcame him; he sank back, feebly clutching for the battered, murderous weapon in his belt.

"Oh, d—n the pack of cowardly coyotes!" he sobbed. "I wouldn't treat a yellow dog this way. They ain't never—going to—take me alive. They can shoot me to hell—but I'll get some of 'em first—to show me the way."

New strength seemed to flow into his limbs at the feel of the pistol butt. He raised the sinister weapon and glared cunningly up the defile.

"D—n their sniveling souls to hell," he snarled. "I'm a better man than any of 'em. And here"—with a sob of utter exhaustion—"they'll kill me off like a—rat in a hole. I cain't—walk. Damn it—I cain't walk," with a despair that was terrible.

He fell back against the rocks; the mountain vistas dissolved into an undulating, smoky cauldron spangled with livid flashes of delirium. A strange thing, but through that quivering void he still thought to hear the voice of the shepherd.

"No"—pityingly—"you can't walk. Your back trail shows it—*all through life*."

Something in the vague presence filled the outlaw with the dim, unreasoning terror of a child.

"Who are you?" he cried. "Where have I heard your voice before?"

"Our trails have never crossed—till now."

"You're a—greaser," he retorted, blindly, the catch of utter weakness in his voice. "And yet—and yet—"

"I might be anyone. Why not a greaser? It is quite as well."

"Huh, you're stuck up about it! And what do you call yourself?"

"My name is Maestro."

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"Greasers always did—have such sweet taste in names," he sneered. "*Maestro! Holy Reno!*"

He felt hands finish the bandaging of his feet. Their tenderness and care did not seem to lessen, in spite of the contempt and ferocity of the hunted animal.

"The first man," he sobbed, "shows a head—d—n his soul to hell—goes out like a match. And the second. Y' cain't follow me into the next world—'cause the' ain't any. And I'd blow out—*this* whole world if I could," winding up with blasphemy one would think unspeakable.

"You are a strange man," said the voice. The hands were now washing the dirt and clotted blood from Steve's knees. "There is no one on earth whose pleasant life you would not wish to destroy? You love no soul in the world?"

"What?" cried Steve, starting up in the reeling spell of his delirium, his brow all grooved with agony. "Did I say that?" He broke down and wept bitterly; for the Madonna eyes had looked at him from within, and there was naught but pity in them now. "Oh, did I say that? . . . I ain't nothing but a beast. I deserve to burn in the—hell they talk about. I ain't never done a stroke of good all my life—nor a mite of kindness. But I wouldn't harm a soul now, if I could. What was I saying? . . . Why, there's two I'd die for—a dozen times over! But I ain't no good. I deserve to die."

"Don't be afraid, my friend," murmured the deep tones in infinite compassion. "There are those that love you, and you love them."

Steve felt a tin cup brimming full from the spring at his lips. He gulped it like an animal. Then he felt a half loaf placed gently in his hands. He devoured it ravenously. A strange sense of new life and well-being invaded the torn body of the hunted man. Vision seemed to open again; the glow and color mystery of the sunset had passed; the world tone was sinking to gray. But how sweet was the cool air in his lungs! How crystal-clear it

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was! How good to be alive! He fell into a blissful reverie, and communed with the pair of lovely eyes within—like angels' they were.

"Maestro," he said humbly, his eyes blind, his trembling hands groping out, "you were—good to me, and I never even thanked you. Your way is Jack's way—and *her* way; and I'm a-going to—take that trail."

A painless, joyful qualm swam over his senses; his mortal being wavered on the edge of unconsciousness; he raised streaming eyes. And saw the gentlest human face he had ever known. The dark eyes were full of a light that seemed to lift his gaze to them. But it was as though another light shone on the strong features and irradiated them with calm joy and triumph. They appeared to melt away before him; the malefactor's soul quivered as though it would leave his body; and the world sank away in a strain of wonderful harmony.

XXI

EVENING

By my penny of observation.

—*Shakespeare.*

THE first gold of Indian summer had tinged the lower reaches of the mountains among which nestled the Sleeping Seven; the valley a pale, translucent amber at eventide; the aspens of the hills one vast smear of ruddy orange.

A man vaulted over the bars of a corral and came up to where another was saddling a horse.

"Some o' the stuff Paul Revered?" queried the newcomer, rolling a cigarette.

Jack looked around at him from the cinching, his eyes thoughtful and full of anxiety. He did not rise to the pun.

"Steve," he said, "I've been thinking things over. You've been here a week now; and this is the very worst place you could be in."

Steve lolled against a post and smiled satirically. The full bloom of his swarthy manhood was back upon him, and the pulse of his giant strength. The man left for dead in the Needles!

"Mebbe that's why I'm here," he retorted, striking a match on the bars. "They'd never dream of looking for me this-a-way, I'm figgering."

"But some one—not one of the boys, they're all right—might chance along by accident, any day, and recognize you."

"That might happen anywheres, I reckon," admitted

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the giant carelessly, and would have dismissed the subject.

"What I never could understand was how you got away, and, besides, how you persuaded Sandy to take you on again."

"Why, I told him just where I'd been."

"You did!"

"Un—hunh; in the hospital at Durango for a month. *He* thought you and me'd both gone with the posse."

"He doesn't know—?"

"Nope."

"But how did you get to a hospital? You never told me. You say they almost had you—that you were gone on your feet!"

"I don't know."

Some dim shame kept him from telling even Jack how he had been befriended by a sheepherder, and a greaser at that! And an inward embarrassment from relating what strange tricks his eyes and his mind had played him just before he descended into oblivion on that occasion. Vague qualms of fear that was not fear swam into his mind upon mere recollection of something, he knew not what.

Following the incident by the spring his mind was a blank until he awoke, bandaged and clean, in a white ward, where a nurse was inserting a thermometer between his teeth.

"They told me at the hospital," mused the giant, "that a crazy sheepman brung me in on a burro. Said I'd been in a rock slide."

"I don't understand it," muttered Jack, swinging into the saddle and sitting there with a foot lopped over.

"Jack," murmured Steve, "I ain't told you; but there was a time in the Needles when I—I looked over the wall into Death. And when I looked back I saw what a brute looked like. It was me. And, please God, if you'll give me a lift occasional, Jack, I want to be like—you, and—and—"

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Jack was touched; yet he tried to laugh.

"For Garry's sake get a better model, Steve! . . . And—who?"

But Steve was gazing into the amber distances with a calm on his face one would think impossible to the man. He did not answer. Jack viewed him in astonishment.

"Steve," he stated, "if anybody's a marked man, you're it; like no other man I've seen in the world. Big as a megatherium—" his hand shifted to Steve's shoulder, and his serious mood to a gleam of mirth—"and four times as ugly to have around. If you didn't tell such good yarns—I—I'd give you up. I would, confound you! Having you here keeps me worried to death for fear some one will slide in and catch you napping."

"I'll slide for British Columbia if they come snooping too close."

Jack approved.

"Well, there's one thing," he laughed. "They may not be so crazy to catch you now, since the Mex government is spending all their money on powder and lead to plug into rebels and had to withdraw their reward. Only think, man! You used to be worth the earning lifetime of three *peons* in the silver mines. And now absolutely worthless again!"

"Jack"—with strange timidity—"do you think there's anybody—but you—that—that cares a damn if I do get caught?"

"Whatever put a fool notion like that in your head! Surely, Steve, you've seen how we're all watching for you!"

Steve was not satisfied; he played with the thongs on the saddle skirts.

"Jack, you—you'll be carrying the mail up to Mason's to-night?"

"Yes."

"You'll see Miss—you'll see the ladies?"

"Perhaps. Why?"

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Steve's face grew a shade darker with the rich flow of his blood.

"That's all," he prevaricated. "I reckon I just wanted to know."

Jack surveyed Steve curiously as he thrust his feet into the stirrups again.

"You don't like—Miss Spenser, do you?"

"No," was the crisp retort, "I don't. She—"

"Heaven knows," muttered Jack, turning away from the other's scrutiny a face that was suddenly gray, "what you'd do if you'd met her more than once!"

But he loped out of the corrals with a smile and the wave of a gloved hand.

"Holy Reno!" mused Steve, wandering moodily over to the bunk-house again. "Ab-so-lute-ly bughouse. And he thinks I don't see it!"

Jack dropped the reins of his pony in the driveway, and advanced to the porch through the purple dusk. They were sitting out for the mist view down the valley; he could distinguish the white dresses of the girls, and Kenneth swaying beside his sister in the hammock, his arm around her. Margaret was seated with her back against a bark pillar, on a cushion at her father's feet.

"Here's your mail, sir," said Jack, instinctively addressing the head of the house.

"Eh? Yes—yes," hardly knowing who Jack was and why he had come. "Won't you sit down?" and relapsed into the darkness of his mind. Jack looked at him, surprised and doubtful, then straightway felt that he would like to stay. These were his kind, but he— And, inexplicably, something tugged at him to sit down by that swaying hammock. The old spell was on.

"Yes, sit down with us, Mr. Day," added Margaret, whose regard for the feelings of others never failed. She proffered a sofa cushion, and before he knew it he was backing the pillar opposite and making both the girls

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laugh with one of Pete Tabary's and Husk McKenna's favorite debates.

Kenneth laughed in a half-hearted way, not to seem ungracious; but the old man sat in his mental torpor; and the small boy, in company with the fox terrier, was out admiring Sandy and feeding her bread. In five minutes Jack was as much at home as if he were in his room at college; and Kenneth found opportunity to excuse himself and go inside.

Violet swung to and fro watching Jack as he exchanged views with Margaret on Bernard Shaw. A strenuous subject of discussion between a girl and a young man! Violet thought she hated Jack; then she thought she hated them both. A tingling impulse was upon her to plant one of the slippers, which brushed so near him, squarely in his broad back and thrust him off the porch.

"I suppose you share his abominable theories about women?" interpolated Violet acidly, unable longer to keep silence.

All the light died from Jack's face; he turned toward Violet, and she was startled at the sudden haggardness of his eyes.

"Yes," he replied, hopelessly. "I do."

"But I presume," continued Violet, in the same strain, "you never consider what a stupid, insufferably dull, entirely prosaic, and utterly conceited lot you men are, especially in this U. S. of A.? Of *course* not."

Jack was silent, as became a gentleman. He glanced at her coolly, with a gleam of complete understanding, and then turned his face toward the other girl.

Violet, the other evening at the Falls, had taken her first seeing scrutiny of this man whom she had grown through a lifetime to regard as a part of her property, and it piqued her and wounded her vanity cruelly. She was confirming it now, her eyes on the rugged profile with the indifferent, quizzical mouth which had that strange

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set of iron in it. Ah, it was *his* option to renounce or keep *his* property! An instant.

Margaret met Jack's glance with a hint of surprise; his lips curved; something caused them both to give way to a fit of silent laughter. Violet was furious.

"Yes," said Jack, with exasperating humility, "there is a young lady just the other side of the range who says we do nothing but chew tobacco and talk about hogs."

"I agree with her," retorted Violet. "You belong with those—those animals. The culture of American men is about on the same level."

"It is a tragical affair," said Jack, in continued smiling agreement, "that an intelligent, cultured lady should be constrained to a sphere in which the men are so insufferably dull that providing the wherewithal for pearls and fine gowns and a round of social entertainment constitutes their only utility and sole valuation. An adorable foreign nobleman, now, *he* breathes a different air; his mind touches lightly—*so* lightly—and delightfully—on such a variety of subjects that—why, nothing at all becomes excruciatingly interesting. Undoubtedly, the beings on this side of the water—" with a flattering inclination of the head—"who partake of that same lustrous atmosphere should also be permitted to stretch their wings in those empyrean airs and flutter æsthetically in the environs of *noblesse oblige*, like—"

"Butterflies," supplied Margaret; then with earnest appreciation in her beautiful face. "Mr. Day, my cousin has been stretching her prerogative somewhat. I even think"—with a glance of disarming deprecation at Violet—"that she has been imposing upon your chivalry and good nature. I'm very inexperienced in—in noblemen, and 'most everything"—brightly—"but you need a champion, sir, for you have put a pillow on the point of your lance."

"It's my general impression," she continued, "that a boy graduates from college only to—"

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"Go into mourning," laughed Jack.

"That is precisely the case," went on the girl. "Nowadays nearly every man leaves college only to work himself to death to provide an establishment and manner of living without which some—butterfly—would not be able to flutter. He has no time for—culture. His time and his brains are all centered on the business he must excel in to gratify somebody who never does anything to justify his spending his life and his youth in such unrequited toil—for somebody who looks to princes and counts for entertainment."

"Oh, come, now, Miss Mason," remonstrated Jack, "it isn't so bad as you say, I hope. The men are perfectly willing; they *want* to work hard to make their wives comfortable and happy."

Margaret's eyes laughed at him.

"Really, Mr. Day, you are a wonderful help. That was just the little touch I needed."

"But—their wives are—"

"To be worked for—to the death?" The girl's face was a beautiful study in earnestness. "No, sir; their positive duty is *not* to forget who wins the money and leisure they spend in exhibiting themselves."

"But women are not to be expected to—"

"Indeed they are," cried Margaret. "To do their duty. The husbands labor for their wives' comfort and happiness. Aren't they entitled to some of their own?"

Jack looked dazed.

"I don't see—" he began, feebly.

"Of course you don't," she smiled at him. "You are one of the downtrodden who have been brought up to believe in the ultimate uselessness of women. You must not insult us so. A woman does not have to marry; but if she does, she has no right to despise and shirk her duty. The poor man wanted a wife, not a fashion-plate and a hotel proprietor."

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"My dear," reminded Violet, "remember, *you* are a woman, too."

"Yes," acknowledged Margaret, with flashing eyes and head held high, "and I am proud of being a woman. We are as good as you are, Mr. Day"—with a smile at Jack—"when we do our duty"—a twinkle at her cousin. "You see, I have come back to the mountains, and one gets time to think of many things in the mountains, even if one isn't very wise. But in the city it is clothes and society; and the man, after toiling and moiling all day as a clothes horse and a society pillar—to obtain the necessary harness and blinkers to keep him a beast of burden, and to drag away enough marble and mortar to keep the pillar in repair—you see?—comes home for a short respite only to live in a sort of inn where his comfort is a secondary consideration."

"Why, Margaret!" gasped Violet. "I had no idea you were so—"

"Hard?" smiled the girl. "I don't mean to be. The look of injustice hurts me, somehow; that is all."

"What would you have women do, then, nowadays, Miss Mason?" inquired Jack, curiously.

"We have the greatest single profession in the world to study and understand. And we have more time to complete our technical education than the students of any other profession; we begin with mud pies and our first rag doll. Yet so few of us know or care about it any more. We don't *need* to vote, whatever they say."

"But how about the women who have to make their own living?" pursued Jack, sounding these views so definite and so old-fashioned.

"If some of us," explained Margaret, "were not so extravagant, the others would have a chance to be women, too. Oh, we can do things a man cannot even imagine, if we try! I don't see why so many girls prefer millinery to brains."

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"Brains do have a certain utility that seems lacking in plumes," agreed Jack.

"It is very possible," replied Margaret, and then amended, "but, then, brains can be applied to a few eggs and some cups of flour as well as to—Bernard Shaw and ugly theories which are not true.

"Now, here's Daddy," said Margaret after a pause, putting her hand affectionately on the old man's knee, "and Harry out there. It's just my plain business to take care of *them*, they're so helpless. And"—with a pride that was beautiful—"they couldn't either of them get along without me—one minute."

"Margaret," said Violet, with affection. "*You* are as good as gold. But most men are not worth taking care of."

"I'm very much afraid," Jack tried to say lightly, "that Bernard Shaw is right about most women. He didn't discuss angels."

There was so much unexpected sadness in the low rejoinder that a hush fell over the group on the porch. Jack roused himself to his *credo*, appealing to the younger and more mature girl.

"You asked me, Miss Mason, what *I* thought of Bernard Shaw's theories. It's the same as discussing one's own theory of the universe." All the fire and enthusiasm were gone; there only remained a dogged resolve to shake his mind loose from the fascination of the girl who had practically ruined his life. "You asked that question; I'll tell you."

And he presented the most horrible, materialistic philosophy that ever a Schopenhauer dreamed out of the dregs of an insipid life. And this was Jack! Something quivered in Violet, she yearned over the fragments of hope and belief and joy; and her guilt made her faint and sick. She, *she* had broken this man on the wheel! Ah, but it was gloomy! Jack had a gift of language when his feelings, rather than his ideas, were seething outward for

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expression. He conducted his auditors through cold star universes where all divine things had passed; it was the horror of evolution multiplied a thousandfold. There was no guiding principle to anything. He pointed up to the studded blue-black vault of the Colorado night, clear as the sound of a silver bell is clear. There were so many millions and billions and quadrillions of those star universes yonder—why should any account be taken of this little point of mold which was so near invisible? No, there was no thought, no care, no plan; it was only chance, a haphazard necessity, and it ended here. His own tortured soul infused a demoniac tone into all this that was positively terrifying.

"I'm afraid—" said Violet. There was a catch in her voice. Jack proceeded, inexorable, bitter.

"And I believe," he concluded, "that the perverse instincts of kindness and humanity that sometimes slip into a human heart absolutely unfit it in the struggle for the survival of the fittest." Then, almost inaudibly, "The survival is not worth it."

Margaret gazed across at him, her hands clasped tightly in her lap; her wide-set eyes shone under the moonlight with pity, and with a desire to help.

And then a strange thing happened. Mr. Mason stirred in his chair; he had not spoken since his single utterance at the beginning.

"Young man, I don't believe you are a Christian."

His daughter gazed up at him, startled. The dark glasses were off and the sunken eyes glowed with the powerful intelligence which had not dwelt there for years.

"I believe in a God," replied Jack, doggedly.

"You're on the wrong track; but then you're only a boy."

Jack stood to his guns.

"A man can but honestly believe what he believes."

"And what sort of a God is that of yours? A lazy, nonpresent, finite god, in a word a *man* trying to rule the

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millions of worlds. In a word, yourself, your own single intellect. And you a boy! Don't you think that the Divine Intelligence which created those worlds of flame, this good green earth, and that slender flower blowing in the breeze yonder—don't you think He knew more about them than you? Why, *He* made *you*! You have agreed that things could not create themselves. And why can you not give the great and beneficent Being who created you and every fiber of your nature credit for the knowledge of your slightest thought and action? Even the smallest sparrow shall not fall to the ground without His knowledge, nor the tiniest microcosm in a drop of water die without His will! Why, *you* have created for *yourself* a finite god, while the Father, who could even send His Son to earth in human form to save you, looks on at you with His divine pity, too great for human understanding! You are only a boy, sir; you have applied the foot rule of human intelligence to the Divine Intelligence. I say, and I am nearer death and clearer vision than you, that you are on the wrong track."

Jack was silent; his head was bowed. All on the porch might have been holding their breath.

"Who spoke? . . . Why, my spectacles! Hilda has lost my spectacles. . . . Is it time for supper? . . . Why, I've had my supper! . . . I had forgotten. . . . Play me something, daughter; my head pains me. Ah, how my head pains me!"

The old man got up slowly, and the broken figure entered the house, one hand to its forehead. Margaret followed him; she was crying quietly.

"What shall I play you, daddy dear?" they heard her say just inside the door. Presently a melody of Schubert floated out to them—a light, care-free lilt that set the pulses atune with the swing of it. No one would have dreamed that tears were falling on the keys.

And so they sat and sat, Violet and Jack Day, silent; but the spell of the music gradually stole away the sadness

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of what had just occurred, and in addition it spirited away Jack's black agony of soul and Violet's sick feeling of guilt and fear. It has been said that Margaret could make a piano sing, and weep, and tremble; she could also make it croon and frolic and glow with youth and beauty; for she seemed to instil her own vitality into her music—a freshness of feeling that was both rugged with health and rosy with the joy of life. I don't know how it came about, but the two on the porch felt as near together as when they were children, and nearer, so much nearer. Jack had never seen her so bewitching, with a new witchery of humility strangely blended with the old imperious charm. He shook himself stubbornly and rose to his feet on the edge of the porch. Violet also arose from the hammock and looked up into his face, trembling, with beautiful, swimming eyes. But his gaze was averted; he did not see the marvels the moonlight was working on that lovely face—and started to turn away. She put her arms up around his neck, and clung, with a sob.

"Oh, Jack! I'm not a Bernard Shaw woman, am I? I believe I would die for you."

The boa-constrictor incident of *Man and Superman* slipped from his mind in the crash of all his faculties. Something might have exploded in his brain, for his pulse leaped along like a crazy whirligig of sizzling pin-wheels. She was in his arms; they were lost each in the other.

"I don't care what you are, little chum. I only know I can't get along without you."

XXII

MILADY OF THE LIONS

I know a maiden fair to see,
Take care!
She can both false and friendly be,
Beware! Beware!
—*Longfellow.*

[T was about ten o'clock in the morning; another day when the air was like wine; another day such as a loving Providence never seems to tire of sending to bless the mountainland of Colorado.

Outside the door of the tiny smithy at the Sleeping Seven two horses stood with bowed heads over their reins, one of them Jack Day's Sandy. Inside, Steve Rohan, in the leather apron common to every member of the Sleeping Seven when he shod his own string, was flipping fiery circlets of iron about on the anvil and now and again bringing his hammer down on the glowing metal, now and again ringing it upon the corner of the anvil to shake off the scale. Jack, to lighten some parts of the task, was striking for him, and in the interims leaning on the sledge and "joshing" happily at things in general. Black Steve did not say much, but his somber face was relaxed and smiling to see his younger companion so gay. Steve's hat was on the back of his head, and the jetty hair curled in moist rings upon his forehead. The bluish smoke, with its acrid hint of scorched metal, wreathed out at the top of the doorway; and the forge glowed within like the ruddy eye of Cyclops.

At one of the active intervals of the anvil chorus, when

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the dull clank of the sledge and the clinking of the smaller hammer were making brusque rhythm, several people looked in at the door. Both men, with their eyes riveted to an inch square of dulling metal, were oblivious to this invasion of strangers; Steve turning and shaping with anxious eye, Jack banging away with the clean-cut muscles arching and rippling along his shoulders and back under the thin cotton shirt, as he stood almost in the doorway, facing the anvil within. The sparks flew in a flat circle, like fiery spokes of a wheel; a sharp-defined horseshoe with half-squared corks emerged gradually from the rude round of iron.

Jack desisted, leaning on the long handle and recommencing his merry tirade on nothing at all. Steve prepared to try the smoking shoe on one of his horse's hoofs, but was frozen to an inanimate state by the sight of the two girls, in convoy of Sandy Hallowell, just outside the door. Both were in the loose blue and white sailor blouses that some relenting fashion arbiter occasionally designs as proper for young women "when at the summer camp, at the seashore, or roughing it in the woods." However that may be, as every one knows, they are the most becoming garment a pretty girl can put on. Steve was stricken hopelessly dumb. His secret—but it was only one pair of wide-set blue eyes which could ever reduce this masterful being to such pitiful imbecility. And the author of it all unknowing.

Jack turned to discover the cause of his discomfiture, and looked into the roguish eyes of Violet. She dropped him a laughing half-curtsey, and struck instantly into a quotation from the "Village Blacksmith." But when she came to—

His hair is crisp, and black, and long,

His face is like the tan;

His brow is wet with honest sweat—

her mischievous eyes shifted to Steve. Great beads burst out on the temples of the swarthy statue; a dark

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maroon tinged the olive skin; and the inanimate came to life, wheeling abruptly to thrust the shoe into the fire. Jack burst into a jolly peal, and such a look flashed from him to Violet, and from Violet to him, that Margaret was astonished and not a little troubled. She knew almost nothing about young men, living a retired life, as she had, with her broken father; and the intimacy and close companionship of that look frightened her, simple and natural as she was. In this case she would not have been far astray in deeming this intimacy of rather too sudden growth. But then Margaret had never taken passage on a trans-Atlantic liner or lived in a summer hotel. For which, indeed, we are duly thankful.

Jack recollected himself and said good morning. Even Steve plucked up sufficient courage to issue forth and try a shoe on the near front hoof of his pony. At the evil, acrid smoke which arose Violet held her handkerchief to her nose with a very wry face, mischief still sparkling in her eyes; and Steve was again in the deepest Tartarus of embarrassment. In truth, she dearly loved to tease, did Violet. But Steve's saturnine humor saved him.

"If you don't like that smoke, Miss, I'll have Pinto stick his feet into some kerosene, or how about some O de Cologne?"

"Eau de Cologne would be excellent. And it would be good for his feet, too. Did you ever think of having him wear scented slippers, perfumed with orris root?"

But Steve was not to be baited. He was at his ease now; and though he seemed bashful, he was not dull. Violet's prey slipped through her fingers; so she asked him questions about the shoeing that were well behaved enough, with no malice in them. At last, in her innocence of ranch convention, she said:

"So you are the blacksmith here? I *thought* you looked like a blacksmith, somehow."

Steve glanced at Jack with his hat off, talking to Margaret and Sandy Hallowell. There was a helpless appeal

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in the humorous upward glance from the hoof in his lap. Jack rallied to his rescue.

"No, Miss Spenser, Steve only shoes his own string of ponies for recreation, the way I do mine. On other days, when things are a bit dull, we both shoe Hippogriffs and Pegasi."

There was such a glow about him, such an unmistakable, sparkling zest of life, that Margaret could not refrain from asking him, half humorously, half compassionately, about the cold star voids and the disadvantages of kindness and humanity. Jack looked with quick earnestness into the deep eyes.

"A rattlesnake must have bitten me. I must have dreamed it."

Blue met blue in a mute appeal to forget the subject. Too plainly, Jack's world to-day was azure and gold, and instinct with loving Providence. And, though man grown, he was only a boy.

Kenneth emerged from the foreman's house thirty yards away, dissembling his disgust at seeing with whom the girls were talking. Not a word did he vouchsafe Jack.

"Mr. Hallowell," he said, "perhaps the ladies would like to see some of the breaking. I know it was most interesting to me."

Over in the breaking-pens the usual roping and manœuvering was going on, a light fluff of dust rising into the air amid a circling glint of glossy backs and withers and a thudding of unshod hoofs. Hallowell was pointing out the gentle, masterly manner in which Jack was handling a beautiful brown gelding. It was edifying to watch his method of treating horses. He never seemed to have an instant's trouble, whatever horse he happened to pick. A little snort of fear after the roping; the strong, steady hand on a quivering pair of nostrils; the soothing stream of words into the averted ears; the mounting from the ground without the stirrup; a short period of trembling

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and bunching of feet under the strange burden; then a confident surrender to the gentle touch on the bridle. It was always the same; and somehow a great deal more absorbing to watch than all the furious struggles the other men had before mastery came. It was almost uncanny.

Sandy indicated Jack with a stubby pipe stem, a slow gleam of admiration in his bushy face.

"Yon mon," said he, "is mair worth at this work than all the ithers togither."

Kenneth was watching Violet's face as she peeped between the bars. Her expression, full of a soft light, stirred a black rage within him. He drew her away from the barrier by an arm.

"I didn't want to tell you, Violet, but I must. Why I—" his voice died to a whisper in her ear. Her faint cry of horror was lost in the uproar of the breaking-pens—the shouts of the men, the snorts of the horses, and the trampling. A trembling hand rested on Kenneth's still bandaged arm; a pair of swimming eyes were raised to his face.

"Yes," he said, impassively, "the first time I ventured to speak to him and try to make up."

The eyes of his sister were not the soft sepia now; they were black, and jetty, and hard as obsidian; and they were turned on Jack, taking off the bridle from the gelding and stroking the soft nose.

"How do ye do it, Jock, my laddie?" cried out the Scotchman jovially, as Jack approached the bars. The young man's face was flushed with pleasure. Sandy delighted in his springy step, so unlike the clumsy gait of many horsemen; every fiber of the perfect body so thoroughly alive and strong as he swung over the high barrier, so utterly atune in its square symmetry. Jack did not try to answer Sandy's admiring query, merely picked up a new rope beside the fence and turned to mount over the bars again.

"Haud on, Jock; I ken Tom Carter sprung the sorrel's

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off pastern when he roped him but now. Will ye show the ladies yon limb of a Rocking Chair, once now? I'll be back wi' ye the moment, ladies."

Jack led the way willingly enough to a heavy-barred inclosure somewhat apart from the other pens and opening upon the two-mile pasture, though the entrance was closed now.

A magnificent black stallion ceased in a weaving fret up and down the far barrier, through which he saw the other horses grazing in distance; stopped in his tracks and surveyed the onlookers insolently with a pair of eyes that would have been like midnight if there were not so much fire in them. He even advanced halfway and stopped again, the small head with its wicked eyes held high on the massive neck, the fringed crest arched like a graceful bow. The sunlight played over the silken gloss of his black skin, defining the swell of mighty muscles on the huge shoulders and lighting a lambent flame in the great beast's eyes. There was not a thread of white on him. He stood there like a wonderful piece of statuary, a fine scorn in his attitude.

"This is Rocking Chair," began Jack, from the top bar. "I don't care for the name myself. I always think of him as *Lucifer*. Look at that pride; look at that scorn he has for puny us. Don't you see a mocking devil in each of those black eyes, looking out at you so steady? Doesn't he look as if he might have been the Star of the Morning, he's so proud and strong and cruel?"

"Has any one ever tried to ride him?" inquired Margaret.

"Tried," replied Jack; "that is all. That brute has been the death of four men; but he's worth five thousand dollars. Sandy just bought him for your father last year. That was shortly after he had been taken up to Cheyenne for Frontier Day—and killed his last man. Isn't he a beauty, watching this rope in my hands with that utter disdain?"

"Hasn't anybody on the Sleeping Seven tried to ride

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him?" It was Violet, a fascinated horror in the eyes fixed upon the infernal grandeur of the stallion, for such it was, no less.

"No, nor ever will. It's all a man cares to do to head him into this corral every other day. The rest of the time he's out in the two-mile."

"That seems peculiar," observed Kenneth, his own voice sounding strange to him. "Haven't you ever thought of riding him yourself?"

"I did think of it once; but I looked at him and thought again. There's something awful about that man-killer, there."

"I believe you're all afraid," rejoined Kenneth, a sneer on the pallor of his lips.

Jack looked a full minute at the stallion; then his eyes wavered.

"Yes," said he, "I'm afraid."

Kenneth's sneer deepened.

Margaret's glance appeared to be a tribute to Jack's courage.

He could not interpret Violet's veiled regard; but there was no mistaking the scorn she infused into her impulsive speech.

"And you never tried to ride him! And Mr. Hallowell saying you were his most valuable man! I don't believe it!"

"I'm not a 'buster,'" he said, softly, his hurt showing in his clear eyes and the faint curve of his lips. "You wouldn't expect me to ride an animal which has thrown better men than I will ever be?"

His eyes pleaded into Violet's.

"No, not *you*," scornfully. "Neither would I expect you to say you were afraid!"

"Violet!" interposed Margaret, troubled, and understanding nothing of the submerged conflict going on. Jack pleaded for the last time.

"I was only speaking the truth."

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Such a hateful look came over the beautiful face that he could have struck her.

"Coward!" it mocked, as plainly as if Violet had uttered the words. A great, frozen stillness fell over his soul, a waste where he was alone, and no one cared how alone.

"Violet," the name came in unconscious bitterness to his lips, "let me tell you a story. There was once a beautiful French lady looking over into a stone pit where the king kept a number of great lions." His brooding eyes sought the sinister form of the stallion. "Well, there was a gentleman with this lady, among others, who loved her very much and wished to marry her. In her playful way she said to him: 'If I threw my glove down there among the lions, would you get it for me?' 'Yes,' said he, '*if you would throw it there.*' And this great lady *did* throw her glove among the lions, thinking to show how close captive she held the man's heart. And he *did* leap down and snatch up the glove, narrowly escaping being torn to pieces. But when he returned with the glove, he flung it into—the lady's face.

"Now, finish your work. You wouldn't leave me alone even here, where I was happy."

His face was like a rock; the pallor of death might have begun to show there; and his eyes were on—nothing. Violet was frozen with terror.

"Yes, I am afraid, Violet. But I will ride all hell itself—with a hackamore."

He leaped down into the corral and walked over toward the great beast, coiling the rope in his hands.

"Stop!" cried Kenneth, trying to climb over the bars with his one arm. Jack paid no heed whatever. Violet gave a little moan and fell in a faint. Kenneth had to pause and raise her. Margaret saw man and horse gradually near each other, circling; she ran, like a young doe, over to the breaking-pens.

Meanwhile, Jack was using none of his usual gentle means with Lucifer. Closer and closer, with the mighty

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stallion baring his teeth wickedly, the white beginning to show in his evil eyes. In his dark heart he was meditating whether or not to leap on this puny thing and bury hoof and fang in the squirming body as he had— No—there was the rope! He avoided it, mocking with eye and the sweep of his long tail. But it came again, and settled like a serpent over the small head, choking him. He dashed madly at the man—and fell, strangling. The snubbing-post had done its work. When he arose, foaming, the blood tingeing his lips, a piece of the rope was around his nostrils, too, in a hackamore, and the man was on his back. The man said something—one word:

“Mother!”

Now the men were running, coming in haste from the pens, the pasture, the blacksmith shop. It was too late.

“Naething but a hackamore!” moaned Sandy, by the bars. Rohan was on the top rail, his somber eyes alight, burying his nails deep in the wood.

“Stay with him, Jack!” The words from the deep chest were hoarse and pleading.

Margaret looked on, white and terrified; but Violet’s eyes were dazed when she broke from her brother and ran to the bars.

Like a thing from the pit raged the wild horse, rearing, plunging, bucking like a mad creature, with the spurs in his barrel; twisting, turning, alighting stiff-legged with his head between his knees. Horse and man, apparently one, raved over the whole inclosure, aslaver with foam and blood. He tried to dash the man’s leg against the barrier, failed, and burst into another wild explosion of buckings, writhings, pivoting on his heels like a frightful top. Then, suddenly, without warning, he rolled. Violet shrieked and hid her eyes. All along the fence breathed a despairing groan.

Ah, it was pretty! He rolled, but when he arose, drunken with the heavy fall, the man was astride him, digging in those terrible spurs. They all looked at the

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hatless figure, so erect, alert, alive; and marveled at the steel nerves which acted so quickly, the muscles that reacted so powerfully. Truly, a young Titan, his face lit with the battle light, cragged, desperate.

And suddenly the stallion gave in. Jack walked him up the middle of the corral, but there was no triumph in his face. All along the fence rose a chorus of admiring congratulation. Steve leaped down and went to meet the dusty horse advancing, oh, so wearily, with downcast head. Gradually the beast felt the iron clench of the rider's thighs relax. The flaming devil leaped into his eye once more; like a flash he rolled a second time.

Over by the fence Violet had fainted again; for this time no figure arose in the cloud of dust, only the stallion, drunken and staggering. Suddenly the brute seemed to perceive the prone figure. With a bestial scream he dashed upon it with teeth and hoof, lashing and tearing. Rohan rushed at the mad demon, kicking the head and eyes with his heavy boots. Lucifer swung off, blinded. In a moment's time Steve had raised the broken wreck over the barrier, into the arms of the men; they carried it away, and into the bunk-house. Steve was alone in the corral.

"Now, *damn* you, you snake!" glaring somberly at the bleared, blood-smeared, evil head. He walked up to the beast and seized the reeking hackamore. Overcome by surprise, the animal allowed himself to be mounted. Some one who had stayed outside the bunk-house exclaimed that Black Steve was riding the man-killer. Sandy and McMillan and little Tabary were instantly alone with the injured man; such is human nature. Violet was still in a swoon beside the corral, Kenneth over her with a can of water from the trough. Margaret, waiting just outside the bunk-house door, was aware of the gigantic figure on the black stallion.

"Buck, you devil, buck!" with foul blasphemies. He roweled the spurs in cruelly, and it seemed as though the

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old performance were on. Steve was seen to grit his teeth savagely; the legs of the giant closed on the great barrel like a vise. The animal, almost exhausted, coughed horribly; the hackamore was twisting the mighty, jaded neck; the piece of rope yet around that neck bit in and strangled him. He fell in his tracks and lay at length, the blood gushing from his mouth and red, dilated nostrils. Steve sprang to the fence and by main strength tore off one of the solid upper bars, returning to the quivering black body with the heavy stick of timber.

"There, curse you!" and dashed the end into the palpitating skull. The mighty frame twitched in a muscle here and there; the blood and brains welled out of the crushed skull; the man-killer would crush and maim no more.

It was revolting, disgusting. Margaret turned, sick at heart. Violet, her face like a sheet, snatched at her arm.

"How is he? How is he? Tell me! Tell me!"

Little Pete Tabary came out of the door, blubbering like a baby. She clutched at him, crying wildly:

"Is he dead? Oh, tell me, tell me!"

"Jack—Jack—Jack—dyin', dyin'."

The little fellow had lost all his English; he went around the house wringing his hands and wailing brokenly in French. Violet stood outside like a stone; Margaret had suddenly roused and gone inside. Violet dared not go in there; she was afraid. Kenneth came out, begging her to come away; but still she stayed, her eyes, with great purple shadows beneath, fixed on the door.

It seemed an age; then the door opened and the men appeared, bearing a weight on a rude stretcher. Violet, in a horror, saw the head, with its crust of dust and blood, sag and fall over the back of the litter and hang there, dangling, futile.

"Ah!" she shrieked, and fell against her brother's arm. And so that broken thing was Jack! And Jack—kind, manly, noble, gentle Jack—was dead!

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"Here!" came a calm, imperious contralto. "Here," Margaret was saying to Steve Rohan, "hold up his head; it must not lie so."

Calmly Margaret glanced at the sinking Violet.

"I'll take her away on the noon train," she heard her brother say, then knew no more.

XXIII

HIC JACET

Deep calleth unto deep . . . all thy waves and
thy billows are gone over me. . . .

—*King David.*

THE afternoon sun smiled down upon all Trevett; not a shadow was upon the serenity of the infinite; the great peaks glowed a warm purple; the emerald of the valley was as joyous as ever. Even the falls blended their roar into a breathing, calm, slumbrous, eternal. Just outside the cottage whispered the aspens, leaning together, blissful, confidential. The worlds were at peace.

Margaret, parting the curtains in an upper front room and gazing out far down the stretch of parkland, saw at last what she was watching for. Sixteen miles away, creeping imperceptibly across the far field of vision, like a tiny caterpillar, or a piece of black thread under a wisp of gray cloud, crept the westbound train. The tiniest jet of white appeared at one extremity of the creeping thing. The whistle, sonorous and brazen for miles, was lost in the distance—to Margaret's ear. And yet, and yet—that same note goes out in a never-ceasing ripple of sound, through all eternity; a wavelet breaking on the shores of the infinite. And so, and no thing more sure, every word *you* let fall so carelessly, every breath you draw, every thought you think, echoes down the grooves of Time into the dark chasm of Eternity, and is graven forever in the mind of God.

Where now is Jack Day? Where is the tiny film of consciousness that dreamed just now the cobalt of the

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Colorado sky, the mighty presence of the mountains, love, and the Sleeping Seven? Where?

He cannot recall. A short time ago he was in an abyss shot through with flame, struggling in the gripe of a million black demons, fire-eyed shadows that ravened and seared and tore. Then the flame clouds passed to a luster of silver, white radiance on crystal, and jeweled galaxies. Now he was leading a lady down the creamy gloss of a magnificent marble staircase; a beautiful lady with a diadem in her starry hair. 'Sh! the lady was Violet, and how sweet her smile was! But he was on the rack! Ah, what torture! The ballroom sank to the gloom of a great pit where dismal shapes leaned on ghastly levers and tackle, drawing . . . slowly . . . drawing . . . and a fire shape clenched white-hot talons into the base of his skull. Ah, the agony!

The poor head tossed from side to side on the pillow, moaning aloud in its torment. Slowly the haze cleared away, and he looked up into the pity of Margaret's face, and felt her cool hand on his damp brow.

Margaret looked down into the hollow eyes that seemed so black in their agony, at the dogged clench of the teeth against the awful pain, at the pale lips that would not moan now. Only the head rolled imperceptibly from side to side, to and fro, to and fro. Margaret was not professional enough to keep the pity out of her eyes.

"Where is it?" she asked, gently.

"My neck, my neck." The head did not cease in its roll of torment. The cool, tender fingers sought the fiery vortex of pain.

"There is nothing wrong here," said the girl.

"That—that's where—it hurts—and it's—going some." The wan smile over the grit of teeth was pitiful. The head still turned, turned, on the pillow. The consciousness of pain where there was none, and the utter disregard of it where it should have been frightful, puzzled Margaret.

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Truly, the nervous system in its infinite ramifications is a terrible, wonderful thing! It is where the body lives.

"Does it hurt so horribly?"

"Worse—than a—red-hot—rack and pinion." And the tortured eyes tried to smile up into hers. The girl went over to the corner of the room and opened a small leather case; Jack thought she had left the room. He shut his eyes and gave himself up to his suffering.

"Ah—h!" The moan opened the whole flaming abyss of his pain to the girl; she hurried over to him, adjusting the hypodermic needle in her hands.

"Don't you want to see your mother?" she asked, gently drawing his arm from under the covers.

"She's dead." A soft light was on the haggard face.

"Your father? I can telegraph—"

"No." He turned his head aside.

"You must—you ought—"

"No—" The pain was murdering him.

"No. Let me die," he almost pleaded.

The soft hands drew up the loose sleeve over his arm; he hardly felt the prick of the needle; and gradually his world of pain sank away from him.

Margaret had waited a century outside the bunk-house door; at length she could stand it no longer; she entered. The group of men about the table fell back; she stood beside it and looked down at the dirty, blood-stained, broken thing that had been so full of life and fire but now. There was not a whisper among the six men about the wreck on the table. Sandy's bearded face looked suddenly old as he stood at the head.

To her surprise, Jack was conscious, and the terrible look of the upturned eyes almost unmanned her. The pupils were so dilated that none of the iris was visible at all; they were black, hopeless, glazing, in the disfiguring crust of dirt and blood that was the face. Margaret took her courage in both hands, addressing Hallowell.

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"How is he hurt, Sandy? I'm a trained nurse, you know."

But the foreman shook his head. Here was the place for coolness and strength!

"Why—I can't move my feet—they feel cold as ice!"

It was Jack, dazed, wondering.

"Scissors—a knife—anything. Now, put together some sort of a stretcher." She looked about the disorder of the low room and the narrow bunks. "He can't stay here. And some one 'phone to Cañon City or Pueblo for doctors."

She set herself to cut off the injured man's shirt and undershirt, which had only been unbuttoned before. The arch of the chest came to view; the skin, soft and white as a girl's, was marred by a great, bloody gouge of the savage fangs, just to one side of the breast-bone—all that was apparent there. Sandy and McMillan helped her to strip off the two clinging garments, lifting the heavy body while she pulled them from underneath. Jack groaned and fainted away.

"It's just as well," said Margaret, as calmly as she could.

There were great purple bruises on the arms and shoulders, but the unconscious torso was still that of a young Greek, of a beautiful young god. The sphincter muscles just appeared to either side of the flat stomach at the edge of the leathern chaparreras, and the chest arched up massively from this slender waist to a solid, relaxed symmetry of heavy muscles on the breast and shoulders. The neck, from which the blood-smeared head had fallen back, was a beautiful pillar of sheathed sinew—the wrestler's neck, blending down to the square hollow of the collar-bones and shoulders. One of these clavicles was fractured, and the heavy, blue-veined arm was drawn up halfway by the hollowing in of the shoulder. They turned him over on his face, and Margaret pressed her fingers over all the ridged, clean-cut back, and along the

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deep groove of the vertebrae between its resilient masses of muscular tissue. Bum McMillan (former number four of a Yale eight, be it whispered) thought he had never seen a finer back. And Jack had never rowed in a shell in his life; would he ever *walk* again? Bum's attitude of the stoic was a little strained.

"It's here," said Margaret, her eyes and soft fingers intent upon the scarcely perceptible lapse of two vertebrae, just between the shoulder blades. She held his head while the other men deposited him on the stretcher. He was still unconscious.

Now came the doctors. He was lifted again from the kindly Nirvana of the morphia, they hurt him so; prodding him all over and laying stethoscopes to his chest and back. Nevertheless, they were very careful to hold his head firmly when they turned him.

"What can this man have done for a living?" said the one to the other.

"He's a regular gladiator, isn't he?" replied his colleague, and appealed to Margaret for information. She told them all she knew about Jack, and patiently answered their queries as to the nature of the accident, symptoms, and whether any anæsthetic had been used. Jack suffered it in a limp stupor. He was cold and immobile as a stone below the center of the chest, nor had he any feeling below that point. The physicians pressed needle points into the skin, sometimes even until the blood came.

"Can you feel that?"

"What?"

"This."

"No. Where is it?"

It was always the same response to a pressure below that point of life and death. Margaret felt a chill through her own limbs; there was something awe-inspiring, horrible about this death in life. And, more awful still, the broken thing essayed a bitter humor.

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"It isn't the first time I've had cold feet. I had 'em the very worst way before I tackled Lucifer, Miss Mason."

Margaret, in pity, pressed the fevered hand on the bed-clothes. And the man smiled.

The doctors bandaged the gouged chest and set the fractured collar-bone in plaster-of-Paris. Then they debated long and gravely over that tiny, tiny rift in the life chain, that imperceptible chasm of the nerves in the dorsal vertebrae. At last they would do nothing; but turned him gently on his back again and drew up the covers. One, a big, florid man with a Van Dyke beard, explained the case to Margaret.

"There are no internal injuries, Miss Mason, and the man has a splendid constitution. The nerves governing the digestive system are intact, and the heart action is unimpaired, except temporarily, owing to shock."

"Always knew I had a good, big heart," Jack interposed, cheerfully. "That's what has been the matter with me for years."

The two doctors looked their appreciation at each other; then the florid one continued.

"But we couldn't take the responsibility of attempting anything with that dislocated vertebra. It's like this, Miss Mason; ten to one something would shift and"—snapping his fingers—"there's the man's life. But I want, we both want, to compliment you on the intelligent way in which you have taken hold with your patient."

"Can't you do anything, Doctor?" Margaret's eyes alone were troubled as she still held Jack's hand.

"Nothing. It would be trifling with the man's life, and he might—"

"I'm going to die. Isn't that true?"

The physician looked down at the clear eyes, dark with pain, but as cool and fearless as though he had just asked a trivial question about some matter wholly impersonal to himself.

"You are a strong soul," began the physician, slowly,

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looking into the blue eyes, "and I would be gaining nothing by trying to hide anything from you. Yes, Mr. Day, you are going to die."

To his surprise, the haggard head nodded imperceptibly, well pleased. Margaret watched it through a mist.

The doctors took their leave, giving a few final directions to Margaret at the door of the bedroom.

"He may linger for weeks and weeks on end, but he couldn't possibly be moved," was one of their last observations.

Margaret came back immediately and sat down on the edge of the bed, taking Jack's one hand in both her own. His other arm was strapped up tight against his chest.

"I'm not going to let you die," she said, with all the calm strength of the wide-set eyes looking into his own.

"I might as well. You don't want an old wreck around here cluttering you up."

"You're going to get well, Jack," she resumed, softly, using his Christian name for the first time.

"But I may stick around and bother you for months before I pass in my checks," he said, lightly, yet with genuine concern.

"See here now, Jack," reiterated the girl, with gentle determination, "there are not going to be any checks given out, and *you are going to get well.*"

"But they said—"

"We don't care the least bit what *they* said. We are going to have doctors and doctors, until the right one comes. And you are *going* to stick around a long time; you are *going* to get well. And we are only too glad to have you." She finished, and put her fingers over the obstinate mouth that was preparing to object still further.

"Even now your neck does not hurt you the way it did, does it, Jack?"

"No," apathetically. Then, "What did they do to it?"

"Nothing; and it never did really hurt you."

HIC JACET

"Um"—doubtfully—"Christian science."

"By no means. It was the shock of a slight pressure on some nerves that shouldn't have been in the way. They took some of that pressure off. I'm telling you all this so you'll see you aren't such a wreck as you suppose."

She paused to give him some powder on a spoon with a little water in it, medicine left by the physicians to bring down the fever.

"And now there's something else I want to talk to you about, Mr. Patient," continued Margaret, smiling. "I told the doctors that you had some abominable philosophy in your system which would be the only thing that could possibly kill you, and that even then it would have to be let alone with you to succeed. And Dr. Reynolds said, by all means make you forget it; and that in a very few days you could hold a *soirée*. Now, whom do you want to have come to see you? You see, I'm taking you into my confidence—explaining all the details of treatment, so that you'll trust your nurse."

Jack murmured something.

Margaret took his hand again.

"Well?"

"Nobody. I don't want to see anybody."

"That's only one side of it, sir. Who wants to see you?"

This was certainly a new bearing of the matter. Jack yielded.

"Yes, I do, too. Bum, and little Pete, and Sandy, and Steve—all of 'em. I *do* want to see them, after all; they're good boys. And—but there's one I don't think you can get hold of."

"Your father?"

A fleeting wave of scorn passed over his face.

"Olmond, the prospector, 'way up on Pentateuch trail in Trevett."

"They'll all come to see you, not at once, but presently."

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She gently shifted the pillow so as to present a new, cool surface to the fevered head; everything she did for him, even the soothing contralto of her voice, made Jack more comfortable. "Now what shall I read you to make you sleep? What do you like, Mr. Critic?"

Jack demurred. It was too much trouble for her; he was only a sort of tramp, anyhow.

"You mustn't talk that way." The soft finger was on his lips once more. "I'll have my revenge. It's Hallam's *Middle Ages*; that's the sleepest book I know."

She returned at once with the book from her father's library, and read from it to him in a soft depth of tone. What is more, a man with fever at one hundred and three degrees drifted into slumberland like a child, amid a dry-as-dust cataclysm of Guelph and Ghibelline! Margaret stole out on tiptoe and went down the stairs to a late supper; it was almost eight, and dusk was coming on.

As she passed the screen door off the porch she became aware of a huge figure standing doubtfully in front of it, the head in the sombrero bent to one side, as if listening.

"Good evening, Mr. Rohan."

The giant slowly came to life and took off his hat.

"Jack was the only man"—there was a note of pathos in the deep voice—"ever pulled off a bluff with me and got away with it. And he's lyin' upstairs. 'Scuse me, ma'am, I was just a-thinking out loud."

He drew his other hand from behind him, awkwardly, a beseeching look on his great, somber features. Steve had brought his friend an immense sheaf of columbine.

XXIV

MARGARET

I saw her upon nearer view
A Spirit, yet a woman, too.

—Wordsworth.

THE men of the Sleeping Seven never forgot the first visit to their paralyzed comrade, Steve Rohan in particular. Steve had come back to the bunk-house about ten o'clock of the second evening after the accident with the news that everybody was to be allowed to begin to visit Jack next day; but they were not all to come at once.

"That 'd be too much of a good thing," looking about among the tousled heads and lamplit eyes in the bunks. "Miss Mason says they is got to be some sort of schedule, see?"

A gleam of dark determination entered his eye.

"And I'm going to be first. Get that?"

Nobody ventured to demur but little Pete Tabary, his voice filled with tears of passion. Steve wilted suddenly, as if in penitence.

"All right, boys. I ain't got no business being first, anyway. Only—Jack's the only man I ever give a damn for on this earth. I don't mind telling you."

There was a speaking pause; one could hear the plop-ping of the flame in the one lamp on the table. Then Bum said, quietly:

"I vote Steve gets to see him first, boys. He saved Jack's life, you know."

And all the men, even Tabary, had hastened to acquiesce.

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Accordingly Steve, promptly at eleven o'clock on the following morning, the hour designated by Margaret over the 'phone to Sandy, knocked timidly at the door up Trevett.

Some time before he arrived Margaret was having a bright, one-sided argument with Jack.

"Of course you want to meet your visitors with a smiling morning face," she laughed, "and not looking like a Bill Sikes villain in melodrama, with the blue jowl of grease paint."

She was tucking a towel around his neck.

"But I can do it myself," argued the patient, a shamed look in his eyes.

"With that one hand? Why, you'd cut your nose off! *Then* how would you look?"

The sweet contralto laughter was in his face; placidly she lathered it and stropped a razor. Then—and it seemed but an instant of time the velvet touch was on his skin—the wiry beard was gone. Jack sighed contentedly, surprised.

"You're a regular head barber, Miss Mason! It usually takes three times as long."

"I've been head-high-muck-a-muck barber to my father for years," smiled the girl. "I never would trust daddy with a razor. Hot towel? Shampoo? Haircut, sir?" she mimicked, gently laving off the soap and fluffing on some grateful talcum powder. And she was gone.

The giant entered the sickroom ponderously on tiptoe, holding his breath. What he connoted as "hospital stink," the indescribable odor of bandages, antiseptics, and drugs, was blended with the heady perfume of wild flowers and balsam spruce. The sunny room was redolent of them; it was all the boys could think of to do for the invalid.

"Hello, Steve."

Confusion! It was the voice of a living man, and he

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cheerful! Steve had expected to see a corpse, evidently. In a panic he recollected Margaret's whispered instructions at the door: to be as cheerful as possible, and on no account to excite the patient. Steve was primed with some merry little anecdotes of battle, murder, and sudden death. But now he was frightened out of his wits. He sat down gingerly on the chair by the bedside before he saw the hand Jack was holding out to him; this he held for a moment in his great palm as if it had been a model in blown glass, very fragile. The big fellow gazed down timidly at the motionless head flat against the mattress, with its strange pallor through the bronze and its hollow, cheerful eyes. Cheerful! What the devil could he say?

"I killed him for you, Jack," in a somber, colorless tone. He must not excite the patient. Jack stared at him in surprise.

"Be yourself, you old rough-neck. I'm not dead yet. I'll bet Miss Mason told you to be cheerful, witty, but not boisterous. Didn't she, now? And you're doing it. Whom did you kill?"

Steve was troubled at this omniscience. In a subdued tone he recounted the bloody death of the stallion. Then, after a pause, he said:

"We're all hunchin' for you, Jack."

Little by little the invalid himself lifted Steve out of his black mood of foreboding and fear; and by so doing his own apathetic spirit was raised from the depths he alone wot of. Jack could not bear to see any one unhappy.

He told Steve some stories that made the giant burst into guffaws of laughter before he recollected his instructions and covered his mouth, with a frightened look toward the door. At length Steve thawed out, as he always did with Jack; told him of the doings at the ranch, and how the boys missed him; told how he was taking care of Sandy, the pony, and how restless and unhappy she was. Jack was touched to hear how she had broken out of the stable and come into the bunk-house in the wee, sma' hours to

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nose around the blankets of Jack's bunk and nicker for her master. Even the latest McMillan-Tabarian debate at breakfast, about practice and malpractice in medicine this time, was retailed by Steve among the news items. When Margaret came to break up the *séance* the two heads were confidentially close.

"Jack," said Steve, in parting, "I brung you up a brace o' grouse I popped the heads off this morning with your six-gun; but Miss Mason here says you was living on pep-ton-ated milk for a while. Miss Mason," went on the giant, awkwardly, "I'd be right glad if *you'd* take those birds, you being so good to Jack here. You will, won't you?"

Margaret could accept kindnesses gracefully, as well as confer them. Yes, she was very fond of grouse; her father, particularly, liked them very much. Her modest expression of thanks was the sweetest thing Steve had ever heard.

"Why, he's chipper as a goat!" observed Steve, in boundless admiration and surprise, as Margaret ushered him down the stairs. "Honest, Miss Mason, he told me one that 'most bust me before I could stop." Apologetically, "I'm agoing to look out better for it next time. He got off some remarks about being cheerful and not exciting the patient that had me on the string. Did he tell you to tell me that, ma'am?"

"No," replied Margaret, with a smile, "he's what you and the boys would call a—what is it?"

"A josh?"

Steve went away both relieved and mystified.

Jack was lying motionless on his back, held so by some sort of harness that had been sent up from Pueblo. He was watching the shafts and mottles of sunlight cast upon the creamy ceiling from the aspens. All the animation and assumed cheerfulness was gone; a great weariness was in his eyes.

Margaret entered softly and saw the look there; her

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little scheme had failed, then. Steve had carried up Jack's duffle bags; Margaret brought them to the bed and laid them on it, beside the motionless feet.

"Shall I open them and fix them up for you, Jack? You're going to visit us quite some time, you know."

Jack looked up into the lovely, gentle face and acquiesced. She opened them then and there on the bed, going to and fro to the bureau drawers with some of the contents, which were exceedingly limited. A cotton and a flannel shirt; a change of underwear; several blue bandannas; a pair of hob-nailed mining shoes; blue-and-gray "army" socks; a tooth brush; a razor; a long, wicked-looking Colt's .45, in a leathern sheath; two dollars and fifteen cents; and eight thin volumes. There were *Sartor Resartus*, Shakespeare's *Lear* and *Hamlet*, a tiny, gold-edged François Villon, a Tennyson, a DeMusset, Dante's *Divina Commedia* in the Italian, a tattered manual and tables for *Plane Surveying*, and a couple of blank books with the pages closely covered by Jack's square, rigid writing. Jack watched her in silence; he was beyond caring who fingered over his Lares and Penates. Even when a photograph fell out of the *Paradiso* the apathy did not leave his face. Margaret gave a startled glance from the picture to him, but he only smiled, gently, steadily.

Another life built around another Beatrice, and thought worthy by that life of another *Divina Commedia*. Evidently, now the faith and frame were both shattered, the life would— Margaret held up a couple of soiled bandannas that she was saving out for the wash, and tried to dissemble the tears on her long lashes.

What was that? She gazed with widening eyes at one of the blue handkerchiefs—a white maple leaf against the blue; *that* was not a common pattern. A spasm of bubbling light invaded her recollection, a roar and gurgle of waters, a strangling in the lungs! She glanced hastily at Jack, but he regarded her as steadily as ever. Could she

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be mistaken? The handkerchief was soiled and tinged with green stain, and was redolent of crushed grass or leaves or something.

"How long ago did you wear this?" she asked him, impulsively, a strange light in her blue eyes.

A faint color slowly crept behind the pallor; Jack's eyes lowered in shame. Margaret sat down on the bed and laid her hand on the bandaged chest. Her face was flushed, too, and her eyes bright with tears.

"Don't you think I know now? You're a dismal failure as a hypocrite, Jack. Why did you never tell me? Oh, you can't deceive me now. I woke up from a frightful, struggling nightmare; and then I was sinking away peacefully to sleep again with my face against a blue bandanna—with *white maple leaves*. They are stamped into my brain; I don't know how I ever happened to forget them. Jack! You can't keep it from me any longer. You're just like some absurd hero out of a play."

"I never had a sister," said Jack, his face still a mask of shame, but his voice wistful. "And see what you have done for me without my telling you at all."

"But *I* have a *brother*," retorted the girl, emphatically, without attempting to veil her swimming eyes, "and sometimes you don't act a day older than he does. You poor boy, do you think I can let you die now?"

"You can't do anything more for me than you have done."

"Indeed I can. You don't know how selfish I am. Why, I actually forgot and played a prelude on the piano this morning before your visitor came! I'll not—"

"And I enjoyed every note," said Jack. She was giving him another of the fever powders. When she advanced the tumbler for him to drink he took tumbler and hand in his own single grasp and kissed the soft fingers gently.

But the injured man seemed to be slowly sinking, day by day. He sank into uneasy coma often now; great de-

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pressions deepened daily under his cheek-bones, and the steady eyes hollowed gradually, deep into the skull. The heavy frame wasted, the muscular tissue seeming to sluff off like a garment from the square skeleton. It was as though there were an invisible valve closing in the man's will to live and desire to live, as well as the dislocated vertebræ cutting off the life current of the nervous system from three-fourths of his body. Doctors came and went; none would hazard his professional reputation by tampering with that lightning switch on a human being's life. He lay there, indifferent, his eyes on the ceiling, or on Margaret's face while she read Stevenson to him. Even the master, victor over his own invalid state, could not rouse him. She read him *The Ebb-tide*, and he had a faint, unexplainable desire to have the Bible read to him. Margaret read him from the Gospels, and looked up to find him lying in one of his deathly comas.

A letter had come from Violet, a heartbroken, hopeless letter.

"Kenneth took me to a Philharmonic Concert in Madison Square Garden," wrote the girl, "and I had to get up and leave in the middle. Oh, it was horrible! They were playing Chopin's 'Funeral March,' and I thought it was never so grand and terrible and lovely. But all the time they were playing I saw nothing but that litter and that poor, hanging, lifeless head. I have been seeing it all night and all day. I am going crazy, I think."

The letter went on to tell about John Holliday; but the something noble that he had done at college and the something base that the humbled writer had done were blurred over. Margaret gleaned his father's name from the distracted note, however, and a message went out immediately over the wires to the house on Fifth Avenue. Also, in grudging pity, she wrote to Violet to let her know that her victim was still alive.

And John Holliday, Sr., came. The private car was

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drawn aside upon the derailing switch one afternoon late in September, and Jack's father, behind two of Sandy's best horses, set his face toward the house on Trevett.

Margaret led the way on tiptoe to the bedside. Mr. Holliday, looking a little grayer, a little more rugged, a little more uncompromising, stood beside the unconscious form and gazed down at the hollowed features of the world-wrecked being who was once his son.

"He is in one of his stupors," whispered Margaret, "but I can wake him."

Mr. Holliday put his hand on Margaret's arm.

"No," said he, in the same polished mastery as of old.

Margaret had expected him to display some of a father's feeling on seeing his son. Instead, he inhibited any pain he felt at the sight of that waxen face; no one would ever know how the man of iron yearned over his offspring. Not a hint of it was in the level chill bent upon Margaret.

"Who are you?" he asked, abruptly. "Are you his wife?"

"No." Margaret's face was suffused with lovely color.

"Well," said he, with the old clear-cut, cold urbanity, as he turned to look down at his boy again, "I cannot but admire his taste."

Margaret was silent; the wide-set blue eyes were troubled, but it was evident her innocent soul had not fathomed the heartless insult. How any one could look at Margaret and see anything but the Sistine Madonna is beyond comprehension.

Jack was babbling incoherently in his uneasy slumber; evidently about some night he had gone back to Princeton, alone, and stood in the snow under the great leafless trees behind Witherspoon Hall, looking at the ruddy-lighted windows all around the quadrangle and listening to some fellow playing a piano up in Little Tower. But his broken mutterings wandered; now it was: "It's through tackle this time, boys! Hold 'em!" Now it was something disconnected about "Sandy horse," and "Set up

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your machine in the left cross-cut, the boss says," and "Lucifer? No, I tell you. I'm afraid." The massive-hewn head with its thick gray hair bent over the bed as if studying something. Then it started up with a vague movement of discomfiture, almost torment.

"Mother!" the unconscious one was muttering. "Mother!"

Mr. Holliday drew out a black folder and scribbled in it, then turned to the girl, his face still held aside to hide its expression.

"Give him this when he awakens."

He walked out of the door and down the stairs with measured purpose, and climbed into the buckboard at the door.

"Good day," he said, without looking around, and drew the laprobe over his knees.

Margaret gazed after the retreating vehicle, the slip of paper in her hand. It was the only time in her life that hatred conquered the natural gentleness of her eyes.

"Mr. Holliday," she apostrophized the square back in its frock coat, "I don't wonder that your son cannot bear to hear your name. Your heart must be adamant."

She glanced at the slip; it was a ten-thousand-dollar check on Kountz Brothers, New York, marked in bold hand-writing, "For hospital expenses."

The buckboard was out of sight.

"Yes, your heart is adamant—with the stamp of the dollar mark on it."

The girl went upstairs and looked down at Jack's face. His eyes were open now, and there was a quiet peace in them.

"He is going to die," thought Margaret, "and his father would not stop to speak to him."

She bent over impulsively and pressed a tender mother kiss on the rugged forehead. The face smiled wistfully.

"Your father was just here," said Margaret, striving to

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keep the indignation out of her voice, "and he left this for me to give to you."

Jack took the paper in his thin right hand.

"And he never stopped to speak to me," he said, in a colorless voice. "I would have expected as much. Margaret, will you let me have a tablet and a pencil, just a second, please?"

The girl held the tablet for him to write, expecting him to indite some sort of message. Instead, he awkwardly held the check down on it and wrote with the same hand:

"Thanks—John Holliday."

It was across the face of the check.

"Now, Margaret," he said, with his wistful, sunken eyes on her face, "do as you please. You can draw it out for me—my expenses; or you can seal it in an envelope and address the envelope to John Holliday, Esquire, Fifth Avenue, New York City."

"It shall go out to him on to-night's mail," she said, promptly, vigorously.

"Thank you, dear lady," replied the feeble voice. "You are the kindest, sweetest soul in the world. I would give anything if you were my sister."

She turned her face aside to hide the tears. But Jack was murmuring again.

"Margaret, I'd like to see my pardner, see old Olmond, again, before—"

The man's mind sank in a stupor once more.

XXV

WHEN IRON IS BROKEN

Could ye come back to me, Douglas! Douglas!
In the old likeness that I knew,
I would be so faithful, so loving, Douglas!
Douglas! Douglas! tender and true.

—*Lady Jane Scott.*

THE Spensers were staying at the Plaza. Violet had cast one glance about the darkened drawing-room of their house on the Avenue, and fled. The furniture, swathed in white wrappings, the silence of the padded floors, the dim atmosphere, was all a charnel house to her. She could have shrieked aloud. As it was, the direction she gave to the chauffeur at the door was incoherent indeed. A policeman was standing by, near the gray-headed old caretaker at the door of the tonneau.

"Well, Miss, shall I be 'aving the 'ouse ready for you and Mr. Spenser?"

"No, no, *no!*" cried she, distracted, hardly aware of what she was doing; then became strangely composed and drew the veil down over her white, twitching face. "No, Barlow, I don't think we shall stay. We'll go—to Palm Beach—or somewhere. I—Mr. Spenser will speak to you about it."

She fumbled in her purse for a bill for the old man.

"Sure, mum, and it *is* lonesome to come back alone," ventured the policeman, compassionately, he could not tell why. He was rewarded by a beautiful, heartbroken smile. Violet remembered that Kenneth had spoken to this man particularly about the house.

"Barlow. . . And, officer, this is for you. Thank you,

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both of you. . . . Back to the Plaza, please," and the big car swung into the Avenue, and sped on down to Fifty-ninth Street. Violet sat back in the tonneau, oblivious of the throngs along the pavements, the rush of passing motor cars and 'buses, the magnificent palaces of the rich upon her left, even of the green expanse of the Park to her right. Oblivious of it all. She was sick, sick at heart. Once, however, the sight of the palatial abode of John Holliday seemed to sear her eyeballs. A palace! And Jack lying in a log hovel, on a wretched bunk surrounded by rough men, uncared for—and with a broken back! God! No, he was dead now. Why hadn't she had the courage? She hid her miserable face there in the sight of all Fifth Avenue, and gave no thought to her surroundings. A dozen acquaintances and friends might have passed for all she cared.

Up in their suite at the Plaza she sat on a couch and looked straight before her with fixed, wretched eyes. There were half a dozen 'phone calls, but she let the bell whirl away, without troubling to get up. Some cards were brought up by the bell boy, and she took them without glancing at them. Miss Spenser was at home to no one. And last, some flowers from somebody. She left them in their long box on the center table, unopened, and cried miserably. . . . Oh, Jack, Jack, you will never smile your boy-smile at me any more! Your lovable, merry nonsense is stilled forever! . . . The charm of that sweetness of expression she knew so well rose before her in a cloud of grief. . . . Oh, Jack, you had the heart of a child, of a pure young girl! You were Bayard, without fear and without reproach. . . . She wept bitterly, until she was almost blind, how long she did not know. Kenneth came in at six o'clock and found her there, huddled among the cushions of the couch.

The brother heart in him turned to water to see her in such distress. Standing over her, he stroked his sister's hair; but his own voice shook when he tried to cheer her.

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"Come, come, Sis. Don't do that. You'll make yourself ill."

She did not move; and sitting down beside her, he gathered her in his arms, murmuring consolation and sympathy.

"Now, now—little sister, it wasn't your fault. It—"

She struggled away from him, and cried out in a strange, harsh voice, her tear-stained face still and white.

"It was! It was! Oh, why did I do it? I hate you! I hate myself!"

And then she was back again, crying on his shoulder.

"Wait," said Kenneth, at length, "there is some mail on the table. Did you see what it was?"

"No, no. It does not matter to me."

"But look—here is a note from Margaret. She—"

Violet snatched it from his hand and devoured it with hard, inflamed eyes.

"Still alive—but he is going to die," and laughed out hysterically, walking up and down like a mad woman. "Still alive—and *going to die*. Oh, it is worse! It is maddening. It is maddening to be here, and—"

"But there is nothing to be done. What can you do, Vi? He—"

"Nothing! *Nothing!* But suffer! Oh, Kenny, Kenny, it is all right for *you*. You have your seat at the Stock Exchange; you can bustle about on Wall Street; you can forget. But I—I—there is nothing to do—but go mad."

"This is folly," cried Kenneth, suddenly taking calm mastery. "You couldn't help it. You can't now. It wasn't your fault. Be still, Sis. Listen to me."

"It is easy for you. You care for no one but yourself. I don't know why I never saw it before."

Violet sat down, stoical and collected. Her brother went on, unmoved.

"It is *you* I am thinking of. You will go now and bathe your eyes and dress for dinner. Mrs. Bliss Malet—"

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"No, no! I can't, Kenneth. I am too miserable." Her voice broke again in spite of her.

"Very well, then, I shall send a regret, which will be inexcusable at this late hour. We'll have dinner downstairs, and then we'll go to a theater. In any event, you shall not stay up here. To-morrow morning we'll take the car and drive down to Princeton. A little country air is what you need; you're upset. You know, Vi, there is to be a sort of impromptu Fall Reunion of my class down there, and you'll meet lots of men you used to know. Lawrence Fraser and—"

Violet listened no longer. She went to her own room and leaned on the dressing-table, gazing with abject self-abasement at the haggard image of herself in the mirror.

"He will be everywhere. On the street, in the eyes of every one I meet, in the back of my soul. What is the difference? Here or there—or nowhere?"

And she mechanically rang for her maid, and picked out a gown for the evening.

It was cool, pale loveliness which swept into the room where Kenneth was waiting in his evening clothes. He looked up at her, at the contrast of the snowy shoulders above the dark stuff of the gown; the proud, beautiful face that might never have known a smile—the dark eyes alone holding a wild apathy; even at the perfect, ringless hands with the long gloves in them.

Kenneth rose and kissed her; she suffered it passively.

"You are exquisite to-night, my little sister," he said, and tried to place the orchids against her breast.

"No," said she, "I shall not wear them."

Kenneth had made his own arrangements, trust him for that. They were hardly seated in the pillared magnificence of the dining-salon, amid soft lights, hint of delicate perfumes, and the throb of a perfect orchestra, when the head waiter blandly announced Miss Townsend and Mr. Wendell Townsend. Kenneth glanced at Violet, and then at the two vacant places at the table; after all, it was better

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for him to make it seem her own doing. But he made a mistake in attempting such a clumsy ruse with Violet; she saw through him in an instant, and smiled icily. She was reading this brother of hers where she had been blind before. It was this new instinct which made it perfectly clear to her that he was doing this thing for his own pleasure, without thought of her. She wanted to be alone, alone; it was less bitter to think in solitude, however strange that would seem. Yes, she smiled; it was ice.

"Very well. Which shall I do? Ask them right in with an excuse? Or meet them?"

"Why, Violet!"

"Of course. Meet them. Such a stickler for etiquette, I am sure." His sister's tone was biting; she had never spoken to him thus before. What did it matter if he and Emily—?

Violet was thinking how delighted she would have been to see this girlhood chum of hers at any other time. But not now. Emmy Townsend was only another memento of that night—of *him*—of *herself*. She rose from the table, and they went out together.

"So good of you to send the car around, Kenneth," murmured Miss Townsend, after Violet and she had kissed rapturously. "It is so jolly to gypsy off of an evening without knowing what is to happen an hour beforehand."

"Indeed! And who better fitted than you, Em?" returned Kenneth. "With that delightfully Bohemian combination of raven hair, blue eyes, and a complexion like Jersey cream."

"How flowery we are to-night! Kenneth, you really make me blush with your similes."

"I'll add a little claret and champagne to the cream, then," he laughed, looking down admiringly at the girl, who was really a lovely creature, and actually blushing, "and a touch of cigarette smoke in the meshes of certain hair."

Young Townsend was not having any such romanesque

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exchange of greetings with Violet. Only out of Princeton that June, he had an unwilling conviction that Violet, just his own age, regarded him in the chastening light of a mother.

"Come, Vi," he said, with the utmost informality, offering his arm, his high-colored, boyish face beaming round at her, "lead me to it! I'm hungry as a black bass."

Violet, usually the life of every one around her, sat quiet and distant-eyed through the beginning of the dinner. She knew perfectly well how to instigate a one-sided conversation, however.

"What sort of a summer did you have, Wendell?" she inquired amiably, over the oyster cocktails; and the flood gates were opened.

"Rotten! Dad kept me mewed up in his office all summer while Em and everybody were at Newport. Not that I wanted to be there, but I've a place in mind in the Adirondacks that—"

Violet let him rattle on. She hardly touched the food, her eyes and her mind on distance. Occasionally a wave of resentment would well up within her to see Kenneth and Emily laughing so whole-heartedly together, their heads confidentially close. It was like two beautiful barbarians laughing at the tortures of the Roman amphitheater, to Violet's mind. How indicative of Kenneth's character! she thought. Absolutely incapable temperamentally of holding for any length of time a sympathetic concern for any one but his own splendid self.

"Your pardon, Wendell?" turning sweet, repentant eyes on young Townsend.

"Oh, I was asking you about *your* summer."

"We were in Colorado."

"I see. Mountains. And red-hot Pullmans. Speaking of red-hot, that office in July . . ."

And then her attention leaped dizzily at something the boy was saying.

" . . . One morning he came in to—"

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"Who?"

"Mr. Holliday. By the way, where is Jack, anyhow? I—" and broke off short to see the sudden throes of agony in her face. Gad, what a rotten break to make! thought he.

"Tell me over again, please, Wendell," Violet almost pleaded, "I didn't hear it the first time."

"The—oh, yes—Mr. Holliday came in this morning to see the governor about Seaboard bonds and some Northern Pacific secur—"

"I know—but that other. *You—*"

"I was slaving away at a desk alongside Dad's, under the lash, as it were, and after they had wound up that bond bicker Mr. Holliday said, 'Is that your boy, Mr. Townsend?' The governor said it was, and looked proud, bless him. And I was scared blue when Mr. Holliday turned that keen eagle face on me. I was afraid he'd see my quantum of business ability where I can't find it at all, and shrivel it up with that freezing eye of his. They call him the Napoleon of Wall Street, you know. But I guess I'd better not go on."

Violet begged him to, beseeched him; and he yielded to the wild eyes of her. The scene was before the girl's sight as if the gorgeous banquet-room were turned into a downtown office.

"Yes," said Mr. Townsend, fond eyes on his son's blond head, "we're hitting the line here together, and it's fine to have him. He doesn't know much, but he'll learn; and when the time comes for me to step down he'll have strong, young shoulders to take up my burden."

Mr. Holliday nodded.

"The boy and I have always been great cronies. Haven't we, son? And I enjoy just hearing the scratch of his pen and knowing he's here."

There was a pause. Wendell wondered what lay behind those cold, penetrating eyes, that massive, powerful face. Something rebellious stirred in his boyish soul.

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"Mr. Holliday," he said, "I used to know *your* son. He was a Senior when I was a Freshman; and I think of him as one of the best friends a fellow ever had. He kept me out of all kinds of trouble. What is he doing now, sir? Where is he?"

Not a shadow in the composed features bent on young Townsend. Mr. Holliday did not reply. Wendell had to break that pause.

"I should like to know, sir, for I'd like to write to him and—"

Mr. Holliday put his hand on the arm of his chair.

"You knew my son?" he said, quietly. "Do you think you could give me an unbiased opinion of him?"

It might have been some phlegmatic lawyer questioning a client. Wendell flushed and clenched his teeth.

"Yes, sir, I knew him. And I *cannot* give an unbiased opinion of him. Nobody who knew him could," he cried, in quick loyalty. "*Nobody*. You can't give such a cold-blooded thing about some one you love. Everybody liked him, sir. I'd trust him with anything in the world, my own honor, my—"

Mr. Holliday nodded casually as if drawing on a witness in court; it was quite impersonally he met the indignation in the boy's eyes.

"Purely a special predilection of your own, I see. I gather that he was hail-fellow-well-met with every one. He had no necessity to exert any strong qualities of mind or character, then. He merely drifted, I presume, with the tide of prevailing opinion."

"I don't understand you, sir," cried the boy again, remonstrating against something, he knew not what, under that frigid urbanity. "Drifted? You never saw him play football. Oh, yes, he *drifted* with the ball—like a tiger! He wasn't a fast back, but he could fight off tacklers like a wildcat. We had a fullback who was the star; but when we were in a hole it was always Jack who was given the ball. A brilliant player? No. But he'd

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stand back of that line time and time again to punt. You don't know what that means. You don't know Yale ends; they tackle like tearing catapults. You never saw Jack hold out his hands for the center, as cool as if he weren't going to be smashed back in the mud under half the maddened blue line the next instant. That ball always lashed out from back of our rotten rush line as if it were a mere matter of course. No strong qualities of character!" he echoed defiantly, in entire forgetfulness of himself. "Why, he was a fighter! You could kill him and he'd never back down. A fighter to the last ditch. Did you never hear of how he played through the whole final quarter of his last Yale game without a whimper? Never a word, sir, and with a smashed collar-bone!"

Wendell fumbled excitedly with some desk implements before him.

"Quite an eloquent defense," smiled Mr. Holliday, with what was no smile. "But it all boils down to a statement that he possessed a sort of physical courage to a greater or less degree. Quite admirable in its way, but—"

Wendell could hardly restrain his indignation, but he met his father's eye and bit his lip. Mr. Holliday was addressing Townsend, Sr.

"Such eloquence should not be wasted, Mr. Townsend. I sincerely hope you intend the boy for the Bar?"

"Yes," nodded the other, "he starts his law work at Columbia this coming week."

"Are *you* a fighter?" Mr. Holliday turned so quickly on Wendell that he was startled.

"No, sir," replied the boy, doggedly.

"Appearances are against you. Your success in business is assured, nothing more certain. I have been engaged in what is known as 'business' and 'high finance' for over forty years, and I think I have a fair idea of the true meaning of the terms I deal in." He centered his gaze on young Townsend with a hardening of the jaws. "This is a world for fighters, Mr. Townsend. Take poli-

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tics. Who gets the power? The man who *takes* it. Take business. Who gains wealth? The man who *takes* it.

"You need not look startled. Ask your father, ask any successful man, what, in the last analysis, 'business' and 'high finance' mean. There is no distinction; they are essentially the same. The whole system resolves itself to this: you *gamble* with your own resources and abilities; you wager *your* fortune and sagacity against some other man or corporation which does the same thing; and then you *fight* to stop the wheel of chance at the right place for yourself. A fight and a gamble. You don't see it in the philosophies and text books; but that has no bearing on the truth. The fact remains; this is a world for fighters who understand how to gamble better than the next man.

"I see you don't agree with me. You are young. You *will*. In the mean time you have been to college to absorb a variety of pleasant theories which you will be at some pains to forget. A fight and a gamble. Take the simplest example, right next the soil—a farmer. If that man succeeds, he is in proportion a fighter and a gambler. 'No,' you say? Ah, but there are the sweepstakes. He places them in a furrow—a gamble; and then he fights like a bulldog to turn the wheel of chance away from drouth and destruction, frost and failure. And afterward he fights with something against which he is fortunate ever to gain more than a drawn battle—the markets, the Chicago Pit, the railroad octopus, the powers that be—the fighters of fighters. And he had best see that his arms are bright and his charger well-shod! For they will down him at the last; the only antagonist insurmountable to *their* intelligence is—Death." Mr. Holliday smiled grimly. "And I have not seen him yet. The world still goes on admiringly pouring wealth into the coffers of the intelligence which plans—and gambles; and spurns a pittance into the dust to him who labors

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with his hands. Your father has *his* millions. Ask him; *he* understands. Perhaps I do also. But below they do not comprehend these things—and they never will. *That is why they are below.*"

Mr. Holliday glanced out of the window upon monumental Wall Street. His eyes rested upon the symbol of what he discussed, the pillars of the Exchange. Perhaps they were mistaken, but a gray shadow seemed to settle upon the stern features.

"Pardon me," he smiled, with the same cold urbanity, and rose. "You were eloquent, young man, and I have been displaying some of the minor weapons in my own arsenal. This was to be a brief business conference, for we are all three of us fighters, and the sun is going down upon the chain mail in our smithy."

He wheeled suddenly at the door.

"My boy," he said, in a strange voice, "it is splendid to fight when one is young. It sends the high blood through the veins in a rush. But when one is growing old—well, I think the sight of you working here with your father has inspired me to be rather tedious. Your pardon, gentlemen. Yes, *I* had a boy, too. But he will never be a fighter any more."

Violet, her eyes suffused, pressed the young fellow's hand where it rested on the cloth.

"God bless you, Wendell! You believed in Jack, too."

Young Townsend's embarrassment changed swiftly to surprise.

"Why, Vi—of course—any one who knew Jack—why, we *all* did, and we do now! There must have been some frightful mistake."

The ices were just being brought on; the coffee was yet to come. Violet sat there a moment, silent, then quietly placed her hands before her eyes. From the other side of the table Kenneth's and Emily's conversation seemed to burn into her brain.

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"And, of course, I said, 'Certainly, Mr. Carbur, it looks as if it had galloping consumption.'"

"What did he do then, Emmy?"

"Oh, he crawled out and looked at that tire again, and grunted, and put on his blouse, and got out all his tools for the sixth time. 'Don't you believe in swearing?' I asked him. He looked at me, aghast. 'Please do,' I begged him, 'it is such an economy for the system. The wear and tear must be awful otherwise.'"

"Did he swear, at your request?"

"No; he put in another inner tube in sepulchral silence. We were about to start again when a young chap came along on a motor bike and stopped to look at the one Mr. Carbur had just taken out. 'Say, mister,' he grinned, 'you've got enough sand in that shoe to ballast a schooner.'"

Violet could hear the rich laughter of the two. Then Kenneth:

"Do you know, Emmy, I ran across the queerest old—"

Violet rose, dry-eyed, and stood with her finger tips on the table.

"Yes, Wendell, there *have* been some frightful mistakes. Everything is one awful mistake—"

"You mean—Jack?"

"Why, what's this, Sis? Aren't you finishing your dinner?"

"No," replied she, coldly, "I find I have other duties which have been shamefully neglected."

"What was that about Jack, Wendell? Jack Holliday?" asked Emily, suddenly sympathetic, and innocent of the added charm it gave her.

"Yes, dear. Jack. Jack is in a hovel, dying of a broken back." Violet was calm as death, and her face as pale.

"Oh! Why, Violet—!"

"Sit down, Sis, and fin—"

"No. I must go to—"

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"You are not going two thousand miles out of sentimental folly?" questioned Kenneth, with a note of anger ill-concealed in the deep voice. "You can't help—"

The terrible beam of hatred in Violet's eyes silenced him.

"I have *your* entire code of ethics now, Kenneth. '*Let the dirty dog alone,*'" she mocked bitterly, leaving them sitting, stupefied.

Kenneth excused himself after a moment, and hurried up to their rooms. She was not there. He bethought himself to question the elevator boys on his return. They had not seen her. He gave up the search in disgust.

"Well," he said, as he slipped into his seat at the table again, "I suppose there is nothing for it but to leave Violet's door check at the office for her, finish our coffee, and drive over to Belasco's. I'll send the car back for her. She'll come to her senses."

He took a sip from his demi-tasse and tried to smile at them. Emmy Townsend's eyes were wet with tears, and Wendell had crushed his napkin into a ball.

"Kenneth—I don't—think I *could* go to a play to-night. Oh! That is—"

"Nor I," gulped her brother.

Where was Violet?

Not far away. In fact, she had only slipped on her evening wrap and stepped out bareheaded into twilight Fifth Avenue. Her eyes were not on anything around her; presently she mounted some marble steps and pushed the bell in the splendid atrium of a mansion facing the Park. She placed her hand, as she waited, on the massive bronze knob, thinking in dumb misery that Jack would never bound up those steps again with his whistle and his merry "Just a moment, people!" and turn that knob with his vigorous young wrist.

A servant in dark livery held the door open for her. She was conscious of his gaze past her to see the machine

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that had brought her, and then of his quiet surveillance on herself. She stepped by him like an empress.

"Tell Mr. Holliday," said she, distinctly, in answer to his unspoken question, "that Miss Spenser will see him on some business *which cannot wait*. No, I have no card."

The man showed her into a drawing-room finished in white damask and crystal. She sank into a chair and waited, passive. There were some Greuzes on the walls, harmonizing wonderfully in their soft coloring with the elegant surroundings; but Violet saw only mountains with snow on them, a cluster of low log structures in the midst of a dim parkland, *one* cabin—and then she was trying to discern the scene within.

"Mr. Holliday will see you presently, Miss Spenser."

"Very well."

"Is there anything—?"

"No, I am quite comfortable, thank you."

The man bowed and withdrew. Violet's notice was drawn to the heavy alabaster clock on the mantel. That mantel was Carrara marble, with two beautifully sculptured angels for caryatidæ. But Violet saw only the hands of the clock before her mind was on that other hazy picture again. Eight-forty.

She waited. The picture dissolved into agonizing forms of long caskets and faces waxen in death. She put her hands over her eyes, but could not shut those torturing visions out. She moaned and looked at the clock once more. Eight-forty-five.

She waited. Another picture drifted smokily upon her mind screen and took super-visible shape there. . . . The vestibule of the royal tomb at Charlottenburg. In the purple twilight of the place the stern, powerful figure of the Angel of the Resurrection in his armor, the majesty of the Eternal Mind in the awful beauty of his face. A vision; but it remained graven in her recollection forever. For as she looked she saw it was Jack's rugged

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features bent on her beneath the marble helmet, with the same terrible power and sweetness; and his face was pale as the marble. She wanted to scream, but something gripped her throat. And the Angel smiled. It was only Jack. She slipped to her knees, and cried to him heartbrokenly. The damask and crystal of the beautiful room burst upon her in a spangle of lights again. She rose from her knees and sat down in the chair, her sight swimming in tears. She brushed them away. Three minutes of nine.

"Pardon, madam, did you desire anything?"

It was the servant, respectful, solicitous for her comfort.

"Thank you, no. But will not Mr. Holliday be disengaged soon?"

"I think so, Miss Spenser," and she was alone.

The visions began to float in once more; the girl clenched her teeth, and set her mind to shut them out. She must keep her composure. Even though she had not slept for nights, she must not allow her mind to—must not go mad—until. It was a hunchbacked beggar with crutches, and he was opening the door of the limousine for her at the crowded entrance of a theater. She turned to give him something—and Jack smiled up at her. She sprang to her feet, clutching her temples. Ah, it was maddening! Ten minutes after nine.

She ran to the great reception hall. Another servant greeted her with a bow. Distracted, she pleaded with him.

"I have been waiting a century. I *must* see Mr. Holliday immediately. Where is he?"

"He is upstairs in the study, madam, but—"

"I will go there," she replied, and sped up the stairs without heeding the man's explanation. A bent figure in black was at the head of the stairs.

"Uncle Tom!" cried Violet. "Oh, I must see Mr. Holliday! It's about Jack."

"Yes'm, yes'm, Missy. You *muss*. Marse Jack?"

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Yes'm." The white-headed old negro in his excitement had forgotten there had been a War which had set him free. "Have yo' seen Marse Jack, Missy Vi'let? I give him a sangwich an' he went away, my baby. But the' is a di-rec-tors' meetin'."

"It makes no difference, Uncle Tom. Which is his study?"

The old man teetered over to a door with handsome armorial bearings on the oak and stood to one side, timidly.

"Marse Jack. He—?"

The girl pushed open the door without knocking, and paused on the threshold. There, around the great table in the top of which Jack had watched the fire glowing that gloomy morning so long ago, sat a group of elderly gentlemen, upon whom gray hair and frock coats seemed to bestow a significant atmosphere of dignity and power. The rich depth of tone of the room fitted the picture they made like a frame. So absorbed were they in what the man at the end of the table was saying that they did not see that other picture which the opening of the door presented to their view. Some were scribbling on heaps of papers, with masses of proxies before them. Others were gnawing cigars, their eyes fixed on John Holliday. But he *did* see that other picture, and paused, meeting those wild, dark eyes and wondering at the pale splendor of that figure in the half-released evening cloak. Then he finished what he had to say.

"The branch line to Cavendish is under contract. If Holliday and Massenet do not hold the stock to insure the carrying out of this policy, they *will* hold it by Monday. . . . Your pardon, madam?" and he bowed with freezing question that was at the same time chivalry.

"Mr. Holliday, I must see you at once. It is about—your son."

The man's face turned ashen; it seemed as though he fell, not sat down, in his chair. And, strangely enough,

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such was the concentration of several of the other gentlemen that they did not even look up from their counting of slips of paper and feverish figuring. John Holliday rose slowly to his feet again, his face grooved with agony.

"The meeting is adjourned."

"But, Mr. Holliday," a gentleman with heavy black eyebrows and an iron-gray beard started up at one side of the table, "we have never agreed to—"

"The meeting is adjourned. You will second it, sir."

"Such a proceeding—"

"What is that to me, sir?" The words were as free from emotion as stones. "On Monday I shall own half of the stock you are counting on, and the rest who venture to disapprove of this disposition of these three systems will be ignored."

He tore up the papers before him and threw them to the floor.

"The minority stockholders—"

"Are adjourned. I have just received news that my son is dead. Be so good as to retire."

The man of iron staggered to the fireplace and crumpled into an armchair, his head bowed as though something broken had sunk in upon the ruins of itself. And the men representing so much of the financial and political power on the American continent filed out of the door. Too much absorbed in their own affairs to comment or sympathize, nevertheless there was not one of them who could refrain from wondering why there was something more pitiful in that crumbling of a steel personality than in the most heartbroken sob of a woman. The two were alone.

"Well—he is dead. I paid one of the men at the ranch to keep me informed. I did not want *him* to know. And the last telegram this evening—he was very low. I didn't know." Mr. Holliday raised his head; his expression was absolute composure and control again. "Pray be seated, madam, and pardon my lack of courtesy."

Violet sank to the chair opposite him, awed by the

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granite magnetism of the man. *This* was Jack's father. Was there, now, the faintest melting in those keen eyes?

"Did—did he ask for me? Was he in much pain at the last?"

Only the lowest chord touched in the father's voice told of his agony. Violet went and knelt down at his knee, and burst into a paroxysm of sobbing. A hand came out and began stroking the girl's soft hair.

"Don't trouble, little woman. I'll see that you are cared for. I have treated my own flesh and blood like an outcast; but I have learned the lesson taught." She looked up into his face through her tears. "Sometimes these lessons are harder than we can bear. No one can ever tell my boy now that I loved him. It is part of my punishment that he thought me heartless. Who *were* you, my dear?"

"Who?" The wide eyes gazed into his and saw the broken spirit there. "I am Violet Spenser."

A shock of surprise crossed his face.

"Of the Virginia Spensers?"

She nodded.

"And you are not married?"

"No," and drooping, she burst into another spasm of tears.

"Well—well, my daughter, it is of no consequence. You must take his place. But I must see him before they bury him, and have the body—"

Violet shrieked and clutched at Mr. Holliday's knee.

"Oh, I thought you knew! It is much worse. He is not dead—he is dying. And I am going mad. My fault—my fault!"

And she jibbered into a frenzied narrative of her agency in his son's life ruin. At last she stopped and gazed up at him piteously, with clasped hands.

"And who is the young lady who is taking care of him?"

"That is Margaret Mason, my cousin." She rose

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suddenly with a sob. "And I must go. I think there is an eleven-o'clock train. He is dying."

Something had straightened Mr. Holliday's back and set a light in his eyes.

"I have been unjust—unjust. But thank God he wasn't a—"

He drew a slip of paper from his pocket. Violet fingered it over, dazedly unconscious of its significance, when "*Thanks—John Holliday*" sprang to her sight—the rigid writing of a strong spirit on his deathbed.

"It was only this morning I returned to New York from seeing him there; and this was here even before me. My dear, heredity is an awful thing. It was *my* hard-hearted pride in *him* made him do that thing. Don't you see how the whole life of my poor boy has been ruined by my share in him? We—you and I—are both responsible for this. Let us try to make amends, if God grant he lives that long. The car will be at the door in five minutes. Do you need anything?"

Violet was weeping again, but softly. The fount of tears is deep, and is exhausted only by death of the soul and its best qualities. Mr. Holliday put his arm around her and kissed her gently on the forehead. She cried out to him.

"Oh, you *are* like Jack! I could love you, too, if my heart were not broken."

Violet clung to him, but his eyes were fixed on something above her.

"There," said he, brokenly, "is why my boy left me to loneliness. There. A miserable piece of canvas. It is a cruel jest. We both love her—his Mother."

XXVI

THE ISLE OF AVALON

"Comfort thyself," said the king,
"For in me is no further help; for
I will to the Isle of Avalon,
To heal me of my grievous wound."

—*Le Morte d'Arthur.*

JACK gazed up into Olmond's face with the strange, interior look of one who sees through mists of fever.

"It is a long way off," he muttered. "A long way—"

The old man saw the soundless word on Margaret's lips; and his own waxen features showed his distress. Jack would never emerge from that delirium except to—

"'There's rosemary,'" the boy was muttering, "'that's for remembrance; and there is pansies, that's for thoughts. I would give you some violets, but they withered—'"

Margaret and the old miner stood with their eyes dim upon that hollow face. It held the vague pleasure of a child in a sunbeam; almost a joy showed along the faint curve of the white lips.

"There's the mavis singing, little chum. A sweetest aria from Clytie's opera. But there, he's got a straw, the little quitter. He's going to leave the profession and go into housekeeping. It's so dark in the garden; I wonder if there'll be thunder. You 'member that chap Sir Galahad? They say—he used to get thirsty, too. It's very hot and stifling here in the 'raise.' Perhaps it's the powder smoke in Seven."

Margaret moistened his lips and brow with cold water,

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and the sight of her seemed to float in upon Jack's delirium.

"Margaret! I thought you'd gone away—some-where." His hand felt about on the coverlet and found hers. He sighed. "That's better. You put your dear hand out and it seems to hold me up from—a dark place—where I have no business to be wandering."

Suddenly Jack perceived his old friend, and a shaft of sunlight might have fallen on his face.

"*You* are there, too! I'm glad, for I shall not have you much longer, old-timer. You see, I've just been some-where where they were asking me, 'Why don't you want to die any more? You did awhile ago.' I told them: 'Because it's dark there, and I'll never see any one I love again.' But I'm not afraid. There's nothing to be afraid of; for *I* shall be nothing. Never any one I love."

Margaret knelt by the bed and held his hand to her cheek, pleading with her great, tear-filmed eyes.

"Oh, Jack! I wish I could tell you!"

Jack smiled.

"You and *you*," he said to Age and Youth, "are your own best reasons. I can't think of two such spirits as yours returning to dust—as I shall."

"You never will," murmured the old man.

"No? It's the narrow house, and I'll lie there forever."

"It is the wide house, where you will be free."

"There is only here; and I don't want to go, because I've wakened up to a lot of love and kindness on this old earth that I never dreamed of. For a long time it seemed that everything was selfishness and cruelty. I've had hard, lonely spells when I thought the world was all bad; but now"—and the colorless face was suffused with a calm light—"now I'm beginning to see that it is good—good, and that it was my own fault I didn't see it before. I want to say good-by, and I hope you'll think of me sometimes. Perhaps we may make the same clod—or the same flower, some day—and we'll never know."

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"I shall meet you there, Jack. It is the flower of God's grace, and you *shall* know," said the old man.

"Here is one," said Jack, his wistful eyes on Margaret, "whom I can't imagine going to dust, as I'm about to do. It can't be, dear sister, that you won't live forever and have a cool, soft hand to drive away the fever of some poor, sick soul. God bless you!" Jack smiled again.

"Were it ever so airy a tread,
My heart would hear you and beat,
Were it earth in an earthy bed; . . ."

The dew of death on his brow was not capable of bringing this boy soul low. His eyes lit once more.

"Almost," Margaret," he quoted, "'thou persuadest me to be a Christian.'"

Margaret, on her knees beside the bed, was hardly aware that Olmond had begun to speak. Gradually the old man's voice came to her through the mist of tears.

". . . You'll not die, my boy. You'll only go on a shorter journey to a place where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. This is but the threshold. Out there is life and God; and you will see all you love there, for love can never die."

A film appeared to come over Jack's eyes.

"You will strike ore, pardner . . . Who said that? Margaret!" His fingers tightened convulsively on the girl's hand, and the wildness left his face. "Who?" he murmured. "Who? Yes, I'm here."

Distressed at the disjointed utterance and the seeking expression of the pallid features, Margaret's head sank to the linked hands, perhaps in prayer. But the old prospector only bowed his head, an awe in his pitying vigil of a mind's wanderings in strange worlds.

Jack seemed to see the two of them there; but everything else dimmed to his sight. A cloud gathered in the room; he heard far voices; a note as of a harp touched

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through the sound of many waters; and a light fell athwart the bed, dazzling him. And now he thought that a man stood by the old prospector, a tall man in soiled corduroy rimed with candle grease; and that his hand was on the old man's shoulder. But it seemed to Jack that his own eyes gazed up at that gentlest human face he had ever seen, and yearned to the nameless dignity and power of it, where there was nothing of sternness, only— The newcomer's deep voice was instinct with comfort and tenderness. And the pity of it belonged neither to man nor angel, but to both.

"Why does death look so dark to you, my son? What is all this about the Narrow House and Love that dies?"

"It is all that I can see. Everything swims about me in a white haze. Perhaps I have dreamed a life. Nothing dreaming of nothing."

"There was no love in that dream?"

"Ah!" Jack's eyes became radiant. "It was all love."

"And love was a dream, too?"

"It was the only thing real!"

"And it will die, also?"

"Never!"

"My friend"—the stranger seemed to press Olmond's shoulder, tenderly—"is wise, and his words were the last truth. For it is love which works the miracle that there can be no more death; and you cannot die. Take comfort, my son, for the clouds roll away from the hills and the soul lives. You have been among the thorns—and learned the lesson of kindness."

"I've known you somewhere. Sometimes when Light was Dark to me, I seemed to hear your voice—I don't know why. It brings the sun through even now. You make me doubt if that sun does not shine—beyond there. I forgot all about you until a short while ago, but you won't forget me? You'll still help my pardner when he is burdened? He is old, and I am going away."

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Margaret's warm tears on his hand brought him back to reality with a rush of tenderness.

"Here she is," Jack murmured. "You must have known her father before he—"

"Yes. I know him *now*. And I know you—Margaret. You are a beautiful ledge of Faith for Love to cling to. Peace be with you."

The stranger's eyes fell to the clasped hands on the coverlet, and he smiled. Why did she not raise her head? Had she not heard?

"And I have known *you* a long time, my dear friend." He turned to the old miner. "You are a dweller upon that threshold of which you spoke, and you often see beyond it. And life and God *are* there, waiting for you. . . ."

Olmond did not look up. Jack wanted to speak to him. Had he, too, not heard?

The cloud came over Jack's sight once more. He heard the deep voice saying gently:

"*I might be anybody*. I'm only a sojourner here; yet you may have met me elsewhere—perhaps when you were a little child."

The mists passed; the worlds opened; and the tired soul melted into the vastnesses of them. When Margaret looked at Jack he was sleeping the sleep of infancy. But when she would have looked her joy for the un-hoped respite at the old prospector, he was no longer there.

Two girls were on their knees, facing each other across the sleeping Jack Day. Violet saw the tears in the wide-set eyes of the mother-face looking at Jack; she watched them a long time, humbly.

"He's dying," she choked, "but he's mine."

Her arm clung to the cold knees beneath the coverlet, trembling. Perhaps for the only time in her life Margaret was cruel.

"You have ruined his life and sent him to death."

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Violet bowed her head on Jack's knees and wept with bitter sobs that shook her whole body.

"I have, I have! I'm not worthy to kiss his feet. Oh, I wish we were children again!"

She clasped her hands and looked a long time at the pale face of the sleeper.

"Margaret," she whispered, in a quivering, hopeless voice, "do you see that little scar on his temple? The deep, three-cornered one? *My* heel did that—I had climbed up on the roof of the summer-house when I was a little girl, and the gutter along the edge gave way. Jack and Kenneth were both underneath; it was Jack tried to keep me from hurting myself. My heel struck him there and made him bleed terribly, but I wasn't hurt a bit. They had to take three stitches in it. Oh, Margaret, I've done nothing but hurt him every way I could all my life! And now he's dying. I'm going to die, too. I know it."

She covered her face with her hands, moaning a little prayer.

"Oh, God, let me die, too!"

Margaret's warm heart relented. She came over and put her arm around her cousin and tried to comfort her, but all to no purpose. Somebody knocked on the screen door at the front, and Margaret had to go and see who it was. Violet remained crouched by the bed, in dumb misery.

After a short absence Margaret re-entered the room, followed by a big, florid man with a Van Dyke beard. It was Dr. Reynolds, one of the first physicians to see Jack after the accident. He was talking to Margaret in low tones.

"I don't know why I stopped off here, Miss Mason. I was returning to Pueblo after attending to some men who had been injured in a coal-mine accident near Cañon City, but something—some impulse or other—compelled me to take the train this way instead."

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He glanced at the grief-stricken girl kneeling by the bedside; then, with a searching, professional scrutiny, at the patient.

"He is sleeping naturally," he observed, "but, from his face, he must have lost sixty pounds."

"This is almost the first really natural sleep he has had since he was hurt— Oh, Dr. Reynolds, can't you do something? He is so young and such a brave, gentle fellow."

The physician's face took on a gravity of set purpose.

"My dear child," he said to Margaret, "I will, if I lose every shred of professional reputation that I have acquired in twenty years. He is sleeping so peacefully now we will let him have his sleep out. To-morrow we will—"

And Violet was alone with Jack, crying softly and wishing she were dead.

Next day was a lovely section out of the Colorado Indian summer. Steve and Bum and little Pete Tabary had come up early, their arms full of boughs of golden-reds from the mountainside, to deck the sick man's room. Margaret told them the doctor was there and would operate on Jack that day; so they went away in a state of suppressed excitement.

When she returned to the sickroom the doctor was saying to Jack in his slow, methodical tones:

"I think I told you before, Mr. Day, that you were going to die; and you took it as a brave man should. I want to say to you again that unless an operation is performed on your spinal column it is as certain now as then that you will die. If such an operation is performed you will have one chance in a hundred of complete recovery—and ninety-nine of death. Now, Mr. Day, I have taken my courage and my professional reputation in my hands. Something will not allow me to let such a young man, and one with such unflinching courage, die.

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It remains with you, sir; will you take this slender chance for life? Shall I perform this operation?"

Jack looked him straight in the eye.

"Yes," he said.

Over by the door Violet gripped the jamb to keep from falling.

"Very well," said the doctor, coolly; "I expected as much from what I saw of you. Miss Mason, I cannot operate on this bed. We shall have to move a long table in here. And I had better have a good, strong, steady-nerved man to help me."

"I can send for some one down at the ranch."

Dr. Reynolds eyed the firm, upstanding figure, the broad shoulders, and clear, steady gaze.

"Pshaw! *You* can help me as well—better than any man. Your hands will not tremble, and pass me the wrong instruments, and be insufferably clumsy like a man's."

They moved the solid oak table up from the dining-room and covered it with a sheet. Then, with the doctor at his head and Margaret at his feet, they were about to shift Jack to the broad, extended table.

"Wait," said the doctor, with one of Margaret's aprons on and the sleeves turned back from his ridged, sinewy arms of the surgeon. "Somebody must hold his head while we move him; the cord might sever entirely."

"I will," whispered Violet, quietly presenting herself. The doctor looked at the pale, beautiful face and the eyes so red with weeping.

"Can you? Steady?" The doctor was dubious.

"Yes," said she, taking the dear head in her hands for answer. And so, slowly, carefully, the three of them shifted him to the table.

"Ah!" breathed Jack, such an awe swimming into his colorless face that the others stood speechless. "I am dreaming of you still. I shall dream of you always."

Violet met that look with anguished yearning, stifling a sob. Their eyes clung.

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"Jack! Forgive me!"

The light which sprang into his eyes was a joy that drowned all words.

"You are real! At last! You have come to say g—"

He struggled to raise his head, to hold out his hand to her.

"*Forgive!* Forgive you? *You!*"

With a little, strangled cry Violet sank down, the hand pressed to her lips. Jack's head fell back, a stab of quick agony shooting across his face. He had fainted.

The girl started up, aghast; but Dr. Reynolds set her quietly aside.

"Don't be alarmed," he said. "It is just as well. We shall not have to administer an anæsthetic now—only a little strychnia to stimulate the heart action."

Perhaps he was saying this to keep up his own courage, as Margaret had done in the bunk-house.

Violet bent over the closed eyes and kissed them, saying:

"Good-by, Jack."

Softly she stole from the room.

Margaret and the doctor were slipping off the loose bed garments, leaving the major part of the body covered only with a sheet. Once more, with infinite care, they turned him over on his face. The doctor slit off the plaster of Paris, and the bandages from the shoulder and breast. Especially the arm that had been trussed up was sadly wasted.

"That clavicle has knit nicely; and the tear is healed, too. But he isn't a gladiator, poor fellow, any more, is he, Miss Mason?" Margaret was certain now that the doctor was rattling along to keep up her courage and his own. "This is the French operation. They are less conservative and more sensible than we are. It involves—"

He ran his fingers carefully over the dislocated verte-

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bræ; his face became suddenly tense. He had washed his own hands in water hot enough to take off the skin; now he washed them in a blue chloride solution in a basin by the table, and had her do likewise. Quickly he glanced at the row of shining instruments on the edge of the table. Several of them he laid significantly to one side. Margaret, with a dull pain in her throat, recognized them—bone forceps, artery, thumb, and skin forceps, a sinister retractor for holding the incision open, a groove director, straight scalpels, even a small, keen chisel. The girl paled; it was her first serious operation; and she looked at the unconscious patient with eyes very dark behind her veiled lashes.

"The French operation—a pretty piece of work—a very pretty. It involves—"

Margaret clenched her hands, and her heart began to beat regularly again. The doctor did not glance up from his locus of work.

"Hand me the straight bistuary," he said.

Only an hour passed; an eon of agony it was to Violet. Then Margaret came to bend over the pitiful crumple on the stairs just outside the door of Jack's room.

"You may see him now, cousin."

Violet looked up dully, uncomprehendingly; her own suffering had stupefied her.

"One in a hundred—one in a hundred." The eyes, half-blinded with weeping, nevertheless noted some spots of blood on Margaret's waist.

"He's dead"—stupidly, hopelessly. "I'll go to him."

"No, he's not dead, Violet; he's not dead." Margaret raised the other with her strong arms, those arms which were so much like firm velvet and lissom steel, and supported, all but carried, the drooping girl to the bedside. "You must not touch him; but you can see how peaceful he lies, and how deep and easy his breathing is."

Indeed, Jack was as composed as though already in his

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shroud; his face, the eyes closed, was a waxen mask of peace. Violet hung upon each silken breath, her eyes unbelieving, her own breathing suspended. Margaret's warm arm was about her waist, or she would have fallen. Violet did not see the strange, fleeting expression of pain that dwelt an instant in the girl's blue eyes, for it faded almost instantly, giving place to a flood of tenderness and pity.

"He's going to get well, honey. Don't look so. As kind and strong as ever."

She kissed the bowed amber head and left the room. Violet sank by the bed with a corner of the sheet to her lips, and prayed. There was this difference between Violet and Margaret—just a reversal of molecule structure in the warp and woof of their souls: Violet was woman-angel, but Margaret was angel-woman.

She had just left her cousin at Jack's bedside. She ran downstairs and stood by the screen of the front door, gazing out upon the sheen and gilded shadow of a Trevett nightfall. Oh, the wonderful world! Margaret opened wide her arms to it, and filled her vigorous young lungs with the wine of the mountainland. It was hard for her to think of the marvelous thing that had come to pass upstairs there in that white room without tuning her joyful throat to song and sending the warm throb of her voice out over that blend of color harmony. A gentle soul swung back from the black abyss of Death which yawned for it too early; a strong spirit knitting its wings to skim forth over the glory of God's world again! Can one imagine a truer thanksgiving than this one sent out over the solitudes, wordless, a loving ecstasy!

To live—and to help! It was wonder, magnificence, happiness. If one could have seen the reflection of heaven's light and hues in those wide eyes that knew no wrong, the sweetness in every line of the girlish face, the awe of the parted lips, he would say it was no woman there, but—

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She turned to go within. Just inside the portières sat a man, his arm along the table beside him, his gray head bowed on his breast. As she looked at him, startled, he raised dull eyes to her face.

"May I see my boy? Is he dead—or is he still suffering?"

Margaret struggled to keep the flood of hatred for this man from her heart; it was a desecration. But she could not keep her manner from freezing as she answered him.

"He is alive. You may see him if you wish, but you had best not go into his room."

"Thank you," he said, humbly, and followed the girl heavily upstairs. She pushed the door open. He stood looking in from the threshold at the dim quiet of that bed with the kneeling figure beside it. His hand went out involuntarily. Margaret, watching him with cold reserve, felt a warmth of pity burst into her heart. It seemed that he would never be done gazing—gazing with yearning eyes at the loved face he could not see. At last he turned, and she closed the door. He tried to smile at her, but it was a thing of racking pain.

"Miss Mason," he said, "you are right to be cold and hard to me. It is just. But I have suffered."

She was conquered. There was nothing of chill in the quick sympathy of the hand on his arm, the earnest pity coming into her eyes.

"I am sorry, Mr. Holliday. I did not mean to be thoughtless. Your boy is going to live and be strong once more. Have you had dinner? I will show you where you may rest and refresh yourself after your long journey. Then you will meet Dr. Reynolds at dinner, and he will tell you what a long and useful life Jack has ahead of him."

She left him at the open door of the room she showed him. Her smile was beautiful. He sat down, and it remained before him like—like some marvelous painting

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that human hands will never copy. And he had insulted this—

A rap on the door. He sprang to open it like a boy, expecting to see that gracious vision again. But it was Hilda, the maid, with some cordial on a tray. She informed him in her halting Swedish phrase that:

"Diss iss for you bane tired, Miss Mason say. An' for me tell you Doc-tôr Rey-nolds say you may for see Mister Jack mebbe to-morrow or next the day."

On a placid autumn evening only a few days later Mr. Holliday made an unusual acquaintance. They had dined together, and now it was but the two of them who sat on the porch in the dusk while the financier finished his cigar. Mr. Holliday recalled the affectionate way in which Margaret had introduced this mild-mannered old man, and the joy they seemed to share together in Jack's assured recovery. He glanced at Olmond casually as they sat there. Yes; scars indelible of a lifetime of toil—which had left not a trace in a face of the unmistakable purity of a child's, united to the aspect of a patriarch. Mr. Holliday, in common with all natures of genuine power and intelligence, never mistook broadcloth—or corduroy—for the index to a man. And now they had strayed into general topics.

Margaret came out on the porch to take the sofa cushions in the hammock inside. Both men started to rise, but she settled them again with a smiling gesture.

"You are a mining man, I believe, are you not, Mr. Olmond?" was Mr. Holliday's interrogation, after the pleasant interlude.

"No," smiled the old man; "only a miner—a miner about to go to work for his summer grub-stake in a mine belonging to others. There is a difference."

"A distinction without a difference!" laughed the girl, as she went indoors. The faces of both men brightened to the winning comment before Mr. Holliday resumed.

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"The difference between theory and practice?" His eyes were making curious analysis; he noted that the worn hands trembled somewhat on the arms of the chair as Olmond turned his venerable face toward him again.

"Sir," the old man said, slowly, "you are a young man still, like your son."

Mr. Holliday shrugged his shoulders, indicating his own iron-gray hair. Olmond shook his head with slow negation.

"This," said he, "is the difference. To the young all that is worth while is practice; to the old, theory. Youth looks for results; age for the Great Explanation. When"—smiling—"I was forty, and results took the shape of silver bullion from the Golconda Mine in Nevada, of which I owned a half, I wasn't looking for the reason I was rich and others poor. The world was a banquet spread."

"And it is now, is it not?" urged Mr. Holliday; then continued with a glint of humor in his eye. "John"—referring to his son with happy satire—"is such a literary character that he could not but appreciate this. It's Goethe. He asserts that life is like a game of cards; Destiny deals the pack; and it rests with the players to make the best of their hands."

"I am very ignorant," replied the old prospector. "I do not know your Goethe. A very wise man, no doubt. But Some One else was speaking through his mouth then, I am sure. You have heard of a Certain Individual, Mr. Holliday"—with a bright, disarming look—"who can quote Scripture to serve his own purposes? Yes? Well, Goethe is not even Scripture, sir."

"What would you think he was?"

"A great and amiable gambler—from those words. A child, of giant mental growth, playing delightedly in a very strange world, to him."

Mr. Holliday gazed at Olmond in astonishment; the latter was the most unusual specimen of "uneducated" man he had ever encountered.

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"It's a favorite theory of mine," he said, "that an ordinary active life is a gamble and a fight. And afterward, as you say, a banquet spread."

"Only among kings of the earth is it so. To common folk *life is a gift from God*. And they that would be kings must render an account of their stewardship some day, not far off. For there are those who are not kings."

"You are a quasi-socialist, Mr. Olmond, like my son?"

"I have not followed the movements of the times. I do not even fully comprehend the term. But in the world I used to live in (and I can see everything is magnified and distorted beyond my conception in the greater world in which *you* dwell) the social system is a strained duplicate of Nature's savage and prodigal dominion of the survival of the fittest. A time will come when human understanding and sympathy will relegate Nature to her rational sphere of teacher of the dim dawn of civilization. We are just past that dawn now, I think. We are beginning to see, most of us, that Nature is no goddess, and that the enlightened human mind, the only thing of real divinity on the earth, should rule in her stead, with the mercy and justice she lacks. But in the meantime, sir, the world is being ruled by men who, like you, tread in the bloody ruts of Nature's car. And you would not be so dangerous, Mr. Holliday, if you did not confidently assert—and believe—that your supremacy was gained according to the Decalogue and the Golden Rule."

"Ah! If a philosopher could only live in real life!" commented Mr. Holliday, shaking his head.

"That is where one really should begin," his kindly eyes twinkling. "But I—I will not tire you by a personal account? You have heard of us, the men who go into the hills, after stormy lives, to think. We don't go out in the wilderness for to see a reed shaken in the wind. It is a strange phase of life; men call us hermits. So we are. And sometimes crazy. So we are; for we see visions that are never known below. Do you know why

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we are hermits? Do you know why we go into the hills to see visions? I will tell you.

"They are sometimes like me: at one day in their lives poor and contented, no more troubled by thought than draft oxen; the next, by the turn of fortune, a sudden gift of leisure stirs thought. This happens often about the mines—these hails of gold so abrupt that something is set vibrating in the miner's soul which never stills, unless he is like the lower animals, possessing none. It was wealth—inconsiderable to you, but vast to me. It meant leisure, unknown till then. I traveled, and I saw. And it was written on the wall. *Why has all this wealth been bestowed upon me?* The letters are so blinding that one turns away in fear. And ever after a man looks for the Great Explanation. The miner does not find it in the world. In the mountains, in the still hours, he finds it, in words that cannot be spoken. That is the difference between you and me, Mr. Holliday. You are a *mining* man in the results of the world; I am a *miner* into the reality. The results I did not need so much as others, and it was well to use them in service. Some day *you* will see the great question written on the wall; and success and failure will blend like a strain of music; they are the same. There is only the account that must be rendered."

The venerable eyes held the financier fascinated, so kind they were, so childlike, and so all-cognizant of what was in Mr. Holliday's own mind.

The old prospector rose to go within and take his leave of Margaret. Mr. Holliday's glance followed him.

"I shall look to my ledgers," the financier ended, smilingly.

"A character, that!" he mused, throwing away his cigar. "The Question on the Wall!"

XXVII

THE LIGHT

SPRING came, slipping in coyly late to the high altitudes. The mountains were one slime of wet rocks and thin, spongy green; down Trevett came the roar of the Falls with a deepened note of thunder, swelled by the gleaming trickles all down the fell and valley. As usual, Nature was placidly turning over her cycles; human life never approximates to her calm.

Where are we? This cannot be the mountainland! Perhaps we have something to do with the leviathan liner with the four towering funnels which sweeps majestic up a mighty river. Perhaps the roar of a great, towered city just reaches our ears, punctuated by the hoarse, sonorous blast of an outbound Cunarder or the shriller hoot of tugs and ferries. Perhaps we are somewhere along that protean water front, in a great, dingy, tarry pier where people are pouring down perilous gangplanks; the sound of welcomings and joyous greetings on every side; where women with handsome gowns showing beneath their steamer wraps are clustering about, their anxious faces bent over trunks bursting with fluffy, filmy things—and trying to be—honest—with a harassed gentleman in a visored cap—who claws. And then perhaps—

Two girls were sitting together upon a massy curved window seat in a bow window overlooking Fifth Avenue and the Park. Violet, sitting in an amber-purple ray of the morning sun shining through the armorial window at the top of the casement, seemed somehow changed from what any one had known her before. The delicate fea-

THE LIGHT

tures held an elusive, added charm as she sat there, her book fallen to her lap, her thoughts far away. Margaret had just come to the end of some dreamy musician's life transcript on the grand at the end of the handsome room; but it was not the "beauty born of murmuring sound" which had crept into Violet's face. It was the enduring beauty, the spiritual quality of a soul that has suffered and is henceforth strong. But this was not without a certain shadow which she strove to banish with a happy smile when the magnificent, vivid girl with the snow throat of melody came up to stand with an arm about her and hum a warm, low contralto of "Traumerei," which seemed to breathe all her own vigor and beauty. Margaret looked back with a start from her counting of the limousines which passed below the window. Violet's eyes had filled with slow tears.

"Honey, honey, what is it?" and clasped her close.

"Oh, Margaret, dearest, it's only that I've been so happy since you came home to me. You are so—good—that sometimes I—"

Violet looked up at her, a catch in her voice, then rose of a sudden and fled the room.

Margaret remained sunk in the cushions for a long moment, her great eyes on vacancy. Jack entered the room ahead of his card, and found her so.

"Margaret!" he cried, and held out both his arms to her. Her blue eyes met his quietly, and glistened with joy to see his face so clear and ruddy, and the old vigorous tilt to the shoulders his coat fitted so well.

"Baden-Baden, the Spa, and Sorrento agree with you, Jack," she said, rising and holding out her hand. He took it slowly in both his own, searching her face.

"Is that all you have to say to me, Margaret? Not even—*welcome, Doormat!*"

"Oh, you boy!" she quivered. "You will never change."

He kissed the hand he held, tenderly, then raised earnest eyes of gratitude.

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"Dear creditor for a life," he said, "whom I can never hope to repay."

Mr. Holliday looked gravely across the broad desk in the alcove at his son. Jack was fluttering through the pages of some notebooks.

"You are right, John. But you cannot apply your altruistic ethics to business. It is a game."

"It is not a game that I care to play," smiled the son.

"You will have to, some day. The only principle that holds is honesty."

"I'll admit it's hard to be ethical to-day. It wasn't the case in less complicated times. Apply your principle of honesty, even. Every year your income is millions. *Your* constructive intelligence may be worth that, and more. But *mine*—it wouldn't be honesty for me to continue to receive a fabulous fortune every year—for bungling into affairs in which I never could have adequate insight."

Mr. Holliday bent his head, meditating.

"I have heard of these things. The identical qualities which cause an educated man to become an artist in some branch—and useless—are apt to make an uneducated laborer a panhandler. John"—intensely—"you do not wish to be a panhandler."

"No," returned Jack, a wave of dogged color flooding his face. "I will *not* be a panhandler. That is what you would make of me, dragging me into a position and affairs for which I have no taste or ability." He laughed with complete self-understanding. "I should become a thing of motor cars, teas at the Plaza, and along the Avenue. I should be utterly useless."

"Are you not equally so wandering about?" pursued his father.

"No. I've earned an honest living wherever I went. That is what I mean by ultimate honesty; and it is what I mean to go on doing until I am dead—dead. And



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THE LIGHT

living. I owe myself a view of the stars and a breath of God's air in the open. The city is a nightmare. All the time I'm in New York I never have a natural impulse or idea. I feel myself one of a swarm, precipitated from the fetid air of the place upon the burning stone—of—of toads, flat-eyed with gazing about the wells that are the streets of Manhattan. And in the mountains—I feel that God is there."

"And how do you purpose to maintain a wife and family in your mountain Eden?"

His son's lips curved, his eyes full of twinkling satire.

"Panhandling—I've started off with a bit of artist's work."

Mr. Holliday stiffened back in his chair, trying hard to conceal his disappointment. Jack laughed outright.

"Yes, sir. *Artist's* work. I'll have to sit down in Eden for a while—to put the finishing touches on this—bust of Pike's Peak."

The financier's keen eyes centered on the smiling face, puzzled.

"I dare say," resumed Jack, "not to break your train of thought at all, father—you haven't heard of Pentateuch Power, Limited?"

Mr. Holliday's air of puzzlement deepened.

"Why, yes, John. It's an English corporation, just formed. It has valuable locations for water power pre-empted all over the West—and in Alaska and British Columbia. It—why, it has a station at those falls near the Masons in Colorado!"

"Your range of information always was little short of marvelous. And you no doubt know that next year that station will be lighting Pueblo, Colorado Springs, perhaps Denver."

"I have followed that. But what has this to do with you, John?"

"Oh, I noticed a memorandum on your desk this morn-

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ing for Tingley to wire to Sir Gordon Pym, Baronet. It said something about stock."

"Yes, Sir Gordon has been gathering it up for me. It's a good stock to control from the start."

"But you might as well sell out, father."

"Indeed! Why, pray?"

"Well, it's *my* pan; and my panhandle may not pan out. You see, it's this way. I've been rather a wanderer. And I've always had an eye for the picturesque—in waterfalls that blushed and splashed unseen. They're placing a modest salary in my 'Help the Blind' tin—just to sit around in Trevett and list the streamlet flow. Mayhap I'll have time to perpetrate a literary crime I've been contemplating—between panhandles— Oh, incidentally, Pentateuch, Limited, was born during—my stay in London."

A shaft of comprehension and amazement shot into the father's face; he leaned across the desk and placed his hand on that of his son.

"A game you do not care to play, son!"

"That is not my game, father." Jack's glance was suddenly grave and earnest. "You've told me often life is a fight and a gamble. Very well. Mine will be one fight with gamblers to try to rearrange some of the cards the present régime has stacked on the honest and ignorant. A pose? It sounds so. I may never be able to help matters much. But that is why I intend to stand on my own feet from the beginning, to—"

"You don't mean—"

"I *do*."

"Son," said the financier, and there was almost a mist in his eyes, "you have a hard streak in your nature. It is not just to me to—"

"Father," remonstrated Jack, relenting, "I'm not trying to shut you out of my life. But I want to rise on my own merits. I can't do that on a couple of hundred millions capital. They would ruin me."

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"But your wife—would she be happy out in the wilds always?"

"After I've arrived," said Jack, slowly, with a compression of the lips, "I'll be willing to live anywhere she wishes—even in New York. I've thought this all out, lying on my back. Anywhere—" He faced his father with savage intensity. "But I went down into hell for her, and it would break my heart if the Holliday millions should corrupt *her* at the start, too. I went down into hell for her, and if she has not love enough to help me build a place in the world for both of us, why, I don't want her."

And he laughed the short laugh of a will set in steel.

"That is a hard, hard streak to be left in a man's nature after all you have suffered. It—"

"That is for her to judge."

His son returned very soon. Mr. Holliday heard the motor cut off in the street below and a happy murmur of voices on the stairs.

Violet came in with an affectionate greeting to Mr. Holliday. He brought up a chair for her with his cool chivalry which never failed, then resumed a stand before the mantel.

"My little girl," he began, compassionately, "we have a discouragingly perverse young man to struggle with here. He says—"

Mr. Holliday stopped short at the expression of his son's face.

"Little chum," said Jack to the girl, taking her hand in his and looking her in the face with that sweet smile of his which was so powerful, "what place in the world do you like the best, and where would you rather be?"

Violet returned that expression with a light in her eyes which transfigured her whole face.

"I think," said she, with a low tremor, "just anywhere that *you* would be."

Jack kissed the pretty hand, and she blushed down at him.

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"You see," he cried to his father, "how hard this is for me? I feel like a criminal."

"Why, what is it, Jack?" begged the girl, and then, with quick intuition, "It isn't that I won't be perfectly happy wherever I have you?"

"No, Sis. But would you marry me if I were very poor?"

Violet looked from one to the other of those two pairs of eyes, which were so like and yet unlike, bewildered. She read nothing but agonized question in one, and cynical curiosity in the other. She did not understand, and she moved over to Jack and slipped her arm around his neck, as though protecting him from something. Mr. Holliday winced under the antagonism of her attitude.

"He wishes to stand on his own feet," explained Mr. Holliday. "It is folly, and it is cruel."

"I am proud that he has the courage," she said simply, "and I'll be proud to be his wife."

Mr. Holliday turned away his face. Then he made a last plea.

"John, such a thing as this has never been done before by an intelligent being. To give up incalculable advantages—"

"*Advantages.* Who is it ever takes advantages? Generally a weakling or a coward. And it is not my life; I can't live it. I—"

Violet stopped his mouth with two fingers.

"Jack is right. He is only throwing away a life cumbered with gilded playthings and a gilded society where it is painful for him to breathe. And he is putting aside—"

"Gilded opportunities," supplied Mr. Holliday with half bitterness. "Well, sir, *you are a Holliday.* And a Holliday chooses his course and *never comes crying for a pilot.*"

Father and son gazed into each other's eyes with complete understanding and respect. A pretty piece of joiner's work, linking the "hard streak" so closely in the

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family nature! They gripped hands in a clasp of iron, and Violet put her own soft fingers over that bond as though sealing it. Why were her eyes dim?

"John," concluded Mr. Holliday, with a whimsical shrug of his shoulders, "nothing is left for me but to stand for any vagaries you may choose to indulge in. But how about Uncle Tom? You will have a hard time making him understand your plain-living and high-thinking theories. He was about as cheerful to have around as a hearse all the time you were away. Every day he asked when 'Mist' Jack' or 'Mah baby come back.' It will be exceedingly difficult for him to realize that 'Mist' Jack' prefers a hut in the wilderness to a comfortable home on Fifth Avenue."

"Is that the last, the ultimate objection?" queried Jack, amused and touched.

"*This*; and mark it. You have to have money, to *live*."

"Indeed, you don't, sir!" cried Violet, her eyes bright with tears.

Jack swept her within his arm.

"I thought so, my own Missy," on a low note of certainty. "I've learned that money will buy me hardly anything that I want very much. It will not buy me that sky up there; it will not buy me a moment's peace of mind; it will not buy me a single ray of true esteem from one living creature. It will not buy me *you*, whom I want more than the whole world besides. If it could, you wouldn't be *you*. Isn't that true, my sweetheart?"

"Yes—*oh*, yes!" and clung to him, trembling.

"H'm," remarked Mr. Holliday, looking out of the window. "The value of money isn't in what it buys for people; it's in what it saves them from. Yes, you have to—"

"No, sir," contradicted Jack, gravely, the amber head against his cheek. "You've got to be above the necessity of having much of it, to *live*."

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One can enjoy a hearthfire even in the month of June up Trevett. That evening Margaret and the new Mrs. Holliday were having this pleasure in Mr. Mason's library, where there was no light but the ruddy one cast out by the glowing logs. Over at one side of the hearth Mr. Mason occupied his customary easy chair, a huge volume of the *Federalist* open in his lap. The poor old man liked to finger and pore over the loved books of which the prone mind no longer understood the meaning; but now—his head was bowed on his hand, and he slept. This was Age, alone, dreaming of old days, sleeping toward the grave.

Margaret and her cousin were chatting cozily about the pretty bungalow that was beginning to peep through the aspens across Trevett, when Jack entered the front door, whistling. Violet slipped out, and the girl by the fire saw the tenderness in the man's face as his arms stole about his wife. She felt suddenly alone; her heart smothered, empty.

She went over to her father and knelt at his feet, settling a cushion behind him.

"Daddy dear, I love you," she whispered, smiling up into the sleeping face in spite of the strange pain in her throat, "and I'll take care of you always."

Mr. and Mrs. Jack found her with the same bright, winning smile for them.

Jack paused at the library curtains, as though listening.

"I thought I heard some one knock," he said, doubtfully.

"I'll go!" sang Margaret, and tripped past him. He followed her with his eyes.

Her straight young form stood leaning against the door frame—in the self-same posture he thought to have seen a bent old friend assume on a summer night that seemed long ago, gazing out into the moonlight.

No, there was no one there. But did Jack's eyes de-

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ceive him? A golden radiance seemed to flow in on the faint lines of moonlight, making of the girl's soft brown hair an aura. But the warmth of it faded to the man's sight, and Margaret the Woman stood there, bathed in the silver light of the moon.

THE END

